

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-fourth
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 1 and 2, 1994

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Report of the 164th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 164th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 1, 1994, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 1 and 2, 1994. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 1, 1994, at 6:00 P.M.

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the conference was carried by satellite transmission to more than 1,000 stake centers. The priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately 900 locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

The First Presidency: Howard W. Hunter, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson

The Council of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, and Jeffrey R. Holland

The Presidency of the Seventy: Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, and W. Eugene Hansen

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:*¹ Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Ben B. Banks, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, D. Todd Christofferson, J. Richard Clarke, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, Loren C. Dunn, Henry B. Eyring, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goaslind, John H. Groberg, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Kenneth Johnson, Cree-L. Kofford, Dean L. Larsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, James M. Paramore, Andrew W. Peterson, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Hartman Rector Jr., Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Earl C. Tingey, and Robert E. Wells

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, Eduardo Ayala, C. Max Caldwell, Albert Choules Jr., Gary J. Coleman, Claudio Roberto Mendes Costa, Rulon G. Craven, LeGrand R. Curtis, Julio E. Dávila, John B. Dickson, Graham W. Doxey, John E. Fowler, Lloyd P. George, In Sang Han, Jay E. Jensen, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, W. Don Ladd, W. Mack Lawrence, Augusto A. Lim, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, John M. Madsen, Helvécio Martins, James O. Mason, Gerald E. Melchin, V. Dallas Merrell, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Jorge A. Rojas, Sam K. Shimabukuro, David E. Sorensen, F. David Stanley,

¹Elders Marlin K. Jensen, L. Lionel Kendrick, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Glenn L. Pace, and Hans B. Ringger were excused.

Kwok Yuen Tai, Horacio A. Tenorio, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, J Ballard Washburn, Lance B. Wickman, Lowell D. Wood, and Durrel A. Woolsey

The Presiding Bishopric: Merrill J. Bateman, H. David Burton, and Richard C. Edgley

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

Solemn Assembly

The first general session of the 164th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 1, 1994, at 10:00 A.M. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for the session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand." President Monson then made the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

Good morning. President Howard W. Hunter, who presides at this conference, has asked me to conduct this solemn assembly session.

We welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the first general session of the 164th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience in the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Han In Sang and Lino Alvarez are seated on the stand, and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders

John H. Groberg and Henry B. Eyring are in attendance. We welcome also the many others who are watching these conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except Elders Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Marlin K. Jensen, L. Lionel Kendrick, and Glenn L. Pace, who are serving as temple or mission presidents; and Elder Hans B. Ringger, who is excused because of illness.

We also acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, who are seated on the stand. We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The music for this session will be provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand" and will now favor us with "Lord, Accept Our True Devotion." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder F. Enzo Busche of the Seventy. Then President Gordon B. Hinckley will present the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for the sustaining vote of this solemn assembly.

The chorus sang "Lord, Accept Our True Devotion."

Elder F. Enzo Busche offered the invocation.

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brothers and sisters, President Hunter has requested that I now handle the business of the solemn assembly for which we are met. This is an occasion of great significance for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the world. We shall vote by quorums and groups. Wherever you are, you are invited to stand when requested and express by your uplifted hand whether you choose to sustain those whose names will be put before you. Only those standing should vote at any given time. Following your expression, you may then be seated as indicated.

General Authorities assigned to the Assembly Hall on Temple Square or to the Joseph Smith Memorial Building will observe the voting in those gatherings. In stake centers, a member of the stake presidency will observe the voting. And should there be any negative votes, he will advise us. We shall now proceed with the business of this great constituent gathering, which extends to thousands of halls and homes across the world.

First Presidency

The First Presidency will please arise. It is proposed that we sustain Howard William Hunter as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Those in favor, please manifest it. Those opposed may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church and Thomas Spencer Monson as Second

Counselor. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon B. Hinckley as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and Boyd K. Packer as Acting President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. Those in favor. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain as members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, and Jeffrey R. Holland. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed. The First Presidency will please be seated.

Council of the Twelve Apostles

The members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will please arise. It is proposed that we sustain Howard William Hunter as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his Counselors and members of the Council of the Twelve as they have been presented and voted upon by the First Presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed. You may be seated.

Seventy and Presiding Bishopric

The members of the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy and the

Presiding Bishopric will please arise. It is proposed that we sustain Howard William Hunter as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his Counselors and members of the Council of the Twelve as they have been presented and voted upon by the First Presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed. You may be seated.

Patriarchs, high priests, and elders

The following will please arise whenever you may be participating. All ordained patriarchs and all members of high priests and elders quorums, please arise. It is proposed that we sustain Howard William Hunter as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his Counselors and members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles as they have been presented and voted upon. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it. Please be seated.

Priests, teachers, and deacons

Will all of the Aaronic Priesthood please arise—that is, all ordained priests, teachers, and deacons. It is proposed that we sustain Howard William Hunter as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his Counselors and members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles as previously presented and voted upon. All in favor, please indicate by the uplifted hand. Any opposed. You may now be seated.

Entire Church membership

Will the entire congregation, including all of those who have stood previously, now arise. It is proposed that we sustain Howard William Hunter as

prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his Counselors and members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles as they have been presented and voted upon. All in favor, please indicate by the uplifted hand. Any who may feel opposed. Thank you. You may be seated.

We shall now remain seated as we sustain other General Authorities and general officers of the Church. It is proposed that we sustain as the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy Elders Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, and W. Eugene Hansen.

As further members of the First Quorum of the Seventy: Loren C. Dunn, Gene R. Cook, William R. Bradford, John H. Groberg, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Dean L. Larsen, Robert E. Wells, James M. Paramore, Hugh W. Pinnock, F. Enzo Busche, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Ronald E. Poelman, F. Burton Howard, Ted E. Brewerton, Jack H. Goasland, Angel Abrea, John K. Carmack, J. Richard Clarke, Hans B. Ringger, Marlin K. Jensen, Earl C. Tingey, Alexander B. Morrison, L. Lionel Kendrick, Harold G. Hillam, Carlos H. Amado, Ben B. Banks, Spencer J. Condie, Robert K. Dellenbach, Henry B. Eyring, Glenn L. Pace, F. Melvin Hammond, Kenneth Johnson, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Neil L. Andersen, D. Todd Christofferson, Cree-L Kofford, Dennis B. Neuen-schwander, Andrew Wayne Peterson, and Cecil O. Samuelson.

As members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: Eduardo Ayala, LeGrand R. Curtis, Helvécio Martins, J. Ballard Washburn, Durrel A. Woolsey, W. Mack Lawrence, Rulon G. Craven, Joseph C. Muren, Graham W. Doxey, Jorge A. Rojas, Julio E. Dávila, In Sang Han, Stephen D. Nadauld, Sam K. Shimabukuro, Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archi-

bald, C. Max Caldwell, Gary J. Coleman, John B. Dickson, John E. Fowler, Jay E. Jensen, Augusto A. Lim, John M. Madson, V. Dallas Merrell, David E. Sorensen, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, Lowell D. Wood, Claudio R. M. Costa, W. Don Ladd, James O. Mason, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and Lance B. Wickman.

As the Presiding Bishopric: Merrill J. Bateman as Presiding Bishop; H. David Burton, First Counselor; and Richard C. Edgley, Second Counselor. All in favor, please manifest it. Any who may feel opposed.

It is proposed that we extend an official vote of appreciation to Elder Hartman Rector Jr. and that he be designated an emeritus member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Those in favor, please manifest it.

With gratitude for their service as General Authorities, it is proposed that we release Elders Albert Choules Jr., Lloyd P. George, Gerald E. Melchin, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, and Horacio A. Tenorio as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

Elder Clinton L. Cutler was serving as first counselor in the Sunday School general presidency at the time of his passing on April 9, 1994. Those who wish to join in a vote of appreciation for his service and to release with a vote of thanks Elder Merlin R. Lybbert as the Sunday School general president and Elder Ronald E. Poelman as the second counselor in the Sunday School general presidency may do so by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks and deep appreciation Sisters Michaelene P. Grassli, Betty Jo N. Jepsen, and Ruth B. Wright as the Primary general presidency and Sister Patricia P. Pinegar as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency. We also release all members of

the Primary general board. All who wish to join in an expression of profound appreciation to these most faithful sisters for their excellent service may do so by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Charles Didier, J Ballard Washburn, and F. Burton Howard as the Sunday School general presidency; Sister Patricia Peterson Pinegar as the new general president of the Primary with Sister Anne Goalen Wirthlin as first counselor and Sister Susan Lillywhite Warner as second counselor; and Sister Bonnie Dansie Parkin as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed may express themselves.

It is proposed that we sustain the other general officers and board members as presently constituted. All in favor. Any opposed.

President Hunter, insofar as I have been able to observe, the voting in the Tabernacle has been unanimous in favor of the proposals made. Any negative votes in any other assemblies will be noted and brought to our attention.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your sustaining vote and your faith and prayers. We feel that you have sustained us not only with your hands but also with your hearts. We urgently need your prayers and pray that you will continue to offer them in our behalf as your servants. We shall now ask the new Seventies, the new Primary general presidency, and Sister Parkin to take their places on the stand, if you please.

President Monson

That's a long walk, brothers and sisters. Thank you, President Hinckley and all who have been read in our presence here today.

It will now be our privilege to listen to President Howard W. Hunter, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Howard W. Hunter

Accepting the call

My beloved brothers and sisters, thank you for your sustaining vote. I come before you humbly and meekly, saddened by the recent passing of our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson. My heart is tender upon the passing of my dear friend, particularly in light of the new responsibilities that have come to me.

I have shed many tears and have sought my Father in Heaven in earnest prayer in the desire to be equal to this high and holy calling. I have prayed to be worthy to bear the assignment which thirteen other men in this dispensation have borne. Perhaps only they, watching from the other side of the veil, can fully understand the weight of responsibility and the deep dependence on the Lord that I feel in accepting this sacred calling.

My greatest strength through these past months has been my abiding testimony that this is the work of God and not of men. Jesus Christ is the head of this church. He leads it in word and deed. I am honored beyond expression to be called for a season to be an instrument in his hands to preside over his church. But without the knowledge that Christ is the head of the Church, neither I nor any other man could bear the weight of the calling that has come.

In assuming this responsibility, I acknowledge God's miraculous hand in my life. He has repeatedly spared my life and restored my strength, has repeatedly brought me back from the edge of eternity, and has allowed me to continue in my mortal ministry for another season. I have wondered on occasion why my life has been spared. But now I have set that question aside and ask only for the faith and prayers of the members of the Church so we can work together, I laboring with you, to fulfill God's purposes in this season of our lives.

I also acknowledge the prayers and faith of my wife and family, my Brethren of the General Authorities, and the multitudes of faithful members who have prayed for me, cared for me, and shown concern for my health.

It has been thirty-five years since I was sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. Those years have been rich in preparation. I have met the Saints and borne testimony in North and South America; in Europe and Eastern Europe; in Asia, Australia, and Africa; and in the islands of the sea. Many times have I been to the Holy Land and walked where Jesus walked. My walk is slower now, but my mind is clear, and my spirit is young.

Revelations on governing the Church

As I answer the call from the Lord to lead the Church, I am overcome with gratitude for the revelations which have established the marvelous system by which his church is governed. Each man who is ordained an Apostle and set apart as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve is sustained as a prophet, seer, and revelator. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, called and ordained to hold the keys of the priesthood, have the authority and responsibility to govern the Church, to administer its ordinances, to teach its doctrine, and to establish and maintain its practices.

When a President of the Church is ill or not able to function fully in all of the duties of his office, his two Counselors, who with him comprise a Quorum of the First Presidency, carry on the work of the Presidency. Any major questions, policies, programs, or doctrines are prayerfully considered in council by the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. No decision emanates from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the

Twelve without total unanimity among all concerned.

Following this inspired pattern, the Church will move forward without interruption. The governance of the Church and the exercise of the prophetic gifts will always be vested in those apostolic authorities who hold and exercise all of the keys of the priesthood.

I feel just as President Joseph F. Smith felt on a similar occasion many years ago, when he said:

"I propose that my counselors and fellow Presidents in the First Presidency shall share with me in the responsibility of every act which I shall perform in this capacity. I do not propose to take the reins in my own hands to do as I please; but I propose to do as my brethren and I agree upon and as the Spirit of the Lord manifests to us. I have always held, and do hold, and trust I always shall hold, that it is wrong for one man to exercise all the authority and power of presidency in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I dare not assume such a responsibility, and I will not, so long as I can have men like these to stand by and counsel with me in the labors we have to perform and in doing all those things that shall tend to the peace, advancement and happiness of the people of God and the building up of Zion."

President Smith then continued:

"If at any time my brethren of the Apostleship shall see in me a disposition to depart from this principle or a forgetfulness on my part of this covenant that I make today before this body of Priesthood, I ask them in the name of my Father, that they will come to me, as my brethren, as counselors in the Priesthood, as watchmen on the towers of Zion, and remind me of this covenant and promise which I make to the body of the Church in general conference assembled at this time.

"The Lord never did intend that one man should have all power, and for that

reason He has placed in His Church Presidents, Apostles, High Priests, Seventies, Elders and the various offices of the Lesser Priesthood, all of which are essential in their order and place according to the authority bestowed on them" (in Conference Report, Oct.-Nov. 1901, p. 82).

Those words of President Joseph F. Smith represent my feelings today.

Like my Brethren before me, I receive with this calling the assurance that God will direct his prophet. I humbly accept the call to serve and declare with the Psalmist, "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped" (Psalm 28:7).

Follow the Savior's example

At the time of my call, I issued two invitations to the members of the Church. I feel impressed to give these continued emphasis.

First, I invite all members of the Church to live with ever more attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the love and hope and compassion he displayed. I pray that we will treat each other with more kindness, more patience, more courtesy and forgiveness.

To those who have transgressed or been offended, we say, come back. The path of repentance, though hard at times, lifts one ever upward and leads to a perfect forgiveness.

To those who are hurt or are struggling and afraid, we say, let us stand with you and dry your tears. Come back. Stand with us in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Take literally his invitation to "come, follow me" (see Matthew 16:24; 19:21; Mark 8:34; 10:21; Luke 9:23; 18:22; John 21:22; D&C 38:22). He is the only sure way; he is the light of the world.

We will, as you would expect us to do, continue to hold to the high standards of conduct which define a Latter-

day Saint. It is the Lord who established those standards, and we are not free to set them aside.

Let us study the Master's every teaching and devote ourselves more fully to his example. He has given us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." He has "called us to glory and virtue" and has "given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these [we] might be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:3-4).

I believe in those "exceeding great and precious promises," and I invite all within the sound of my voice to claim them. We should strive to "be partakers of the divine nature." Only then may we truly hope for "peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23).

Attend the temple

In that spirit I invite the Latter-day Saints to look to the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of your membership. It is the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church worthy to enter the temple. It would please the Lord if every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend. The things that we must do and not do to be worthy of a temple recommend are the very things that ensure we will be happy as individuals and as families.

Let us be a temple-attending people. Attend the temple as frequently as personal circumstances allow. Keep a picture of a temple in your home that your children may see it. Teach them about the purposes of the house of the Lord. Have them plan from their earliest years to go there and to remain worthy of that blessing.

If proximity to a temple does not allow frequent attendance, gather in the history of your family and prepare the names for the sacred ordinances performed only in the temple. This family

research is essential to the work of the temples, and blessings surely will come to those who do that work.

We desire to bring the temples closer to our people. New temples have been announced and are under construction. Others are being planned. Soon we will dedicate the Orlando Florida and Bountiful Utah Temples.

Preserve and protect the family

In the ordinances of the temple, the foundations of the eternal family are sealed in place. The Church has the responsibility—and the authority—to preserve and protect the family as the foundation of society. The pattern for family life, instituted from before the foundation of the world, provides for children to be born to and nurtured by a father and mother who are husband and wife, lawfully married. Parenthood is a sacred obligation and privilege, with children welcomed as a "heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3).

A worried society now begins to see that the disintegration of the family brings upon the world the calamities foretold by the prophets. The world's councils and deliberations will succeed only when they define the family as the Lord has revealed it to be. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1).

As we become more removed from the lifestyle of the world, the Church becomes more the welcome refuge for hundreds of thousands who come each year and say, "Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

My brothers and sisters, I testify that the impressions of the Spirit have weighed heavily upon me in considering these matters. Our Eternal Heavenly

Father lives. Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, guides his church today through his prophets.

Let us, as Latter-day Saints, claim those "exceeding great and precious promises" so that we, "Holy Father, . . . may grow up in thee, and receive a fullness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing" (D&C 109:14-15).

I invoke his blessings upon you in your homes, in your work, in your service in his church.

I pledge my life, my strength, and the full measure of my soul to serving him. May we have ears to hear and hearts to feel and the courage to follow,

I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

President Monson

President Howard W. Hunter, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has just spoken to us and delivered a masterful address. He has been followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve will now address us.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

President Hunter, we have been thrilled by your inspired message. We express our love to you. We also congratulate the newly called and sustained General Authorities and general officers of the Church.

Our hearts have united with the Mormon Youth Chorus's spirited singing of Charles Wesley's inspired words, "Rejoice, the Lord is King! Your Lord and King adore!" (*Hymns*, no. 66). With the events of this solemn assembly, we have also felt the overwhelming gratitude expressed in our beloved hymn "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet" (*Hymns*, no. 19). We have rejoiced in the privilege of sustaining President Howard W. Hunter as President of the Church and Presidents Hinckley and Monson as his Counselors. In this worldwide assembly, we have pledged our prayers and best efforts to support the men whom the Lord has called to lead his church. I testify that what we have done has been recorded in the heavens

and that each of us will be accountable to God for the way we respond to the leadership we have sustained in this solemn and sacred way.

Hymns invite the Spirit

Last spring I made my first visit to Brasília, Brazil. Over three thousand Saints gathered for a regional conference. The printed program listed the musical numbers, but the Portuguese words meant nothing to me. But when their beautiful choir began to sing, the music crossed all barriers of language and spoke to my soul:

The morning breaks, the shadows
flee;

Lo, Zion's standard is unfurled! . . .

The dawning of a brighter day

Majestic rises on the world.

["The Morning Breaks," *Hymns*, no. 1]

Through the miracle of sacred music, the Spirit of the Lord descended

upon us, and we were made ready for gospel instruction and worship.

The First Presidency has said:

"Inspirational music is an essential part of our church meetings. The hymns invite the Spirit of the Lord, create a feeling of reverence, unify us as members, and provide a way for us to offer praises to the Lord.

"Some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns. Hymns move us to repentance and good works, build testimony and faith, comfort the weary, console the mourning, and inspire us to endure to the end" (*Hymns*, p. ix).

The singing of hymns is one of the best ways to put ourselves in tune with the Spirit of the Lord. I wonder if we are making enough use of this heaven-sent resource in our meetings, in our classes, and in our homes.

Hymns bring peace and calm

Last July I visited the Church's Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawaii. Before the evening show of dancing and music from various island cultures, I went backstage to thank the performers. I arrived during those frantic moments before the show began. Scores of performers were hurrying through the last-minute tasks required to coordinate their efforts in a fast-moving performance. I wondered how the director would bring this turmoil to order in preparation for my brief remarks.

It happened as if by miracle. On signal, one strong voice began, and the strains of "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet" quickly swelled into a beautiful chorus as the uniquely talented young people brought their thoughts into harmony with the Lord.

We had a similar experience in our family. Last spring some of our children and fourteen of our grandchildren had a family outing in the mountains. One of our activities was a meeting to share

experiences and testimonies. We gathered at the appointed time, but the little people were gathered only in body. The large spirits in those little bodies were clamoring for more of the exciting outdoor activities they had been enjoying. The cabin where we met was too small to contain them, and it seemed as if a dozen restless children and their outcries were ricocheting off the walls in every direction. Grandparents will appreciate the apprehension I felt at trying to sponsor something serious in that setting.

Suddenly the instinctive wisdom of young mothers rescued our efforts. Two mothers began to sing a song familiar to the children. Others joined in, and within a few minutes the mood had changed and all spirits were subdued and receptive to spiritual things. I offered a silent prayer of thanks for hymns and for mothers who know how to use them!

Hymns used to learn and worship

The singing of hymns is one of the best ways to learn the doctrine of the restored gospel. Elder Stephen D. Nadauld captured this unique strength in some lines he wrote and shared in a General Authority meeting:

If I would teach with power
The doctrine and the plan,
I'd wish for gentle music
To prepare the soul of man.

And then to press forever
These truths upon his mind,
We'd sing the hymns of Zion
With their messages sublime.

The scriptures contain many affirmations that hymn singing is a glorious way to worship. Before the Savior and his Apostles left the upper room where they had the sublime experience of the Last Supper, they sang a hymn. After their hymn, the Savior led them to the Mount of Olives (see Matthew 26:30).

The Apostle Paul advised the Colossians that they should be “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16; see also Alma 26:8).

Modern revelation reaffirms the importance of sacred music. In one of the earliest revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord appointed Emma Smith “to make a selection of sacred hymns, as it shall be given thee, which is pleasing unto me, to be had in my church.

“For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads” (D&C 25:11–12).

In a revelation given through another prophet a generation later, the Lord commanded his people to “praise the Lord with singing, [and] with music” (D&C 136:28).

Hymns in temple meetings

This direction to praise the Lord with singing is not limited to large meetings. When the Lord’s Apostles meet in modern times, the singing of hymns is still part of their meetings. The weekly meetings of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the Salt Lake Temple always begin with a hymn. Elder Russell M. Nelson plays the organ accompaniment. Members of the First Presidency, who conduct these meetings, rotate the privilege of selecting the opening song. Most of us record the date each hymn is sung. According to my records, the opening song most frequently sung during the decade of my participation has been “I Need Thee Every Hour” (*Hymns*, no. 98). Picture the spiritual impact of a handful of the Lord’s servants singing that song before praying for his guidance in fulfilling their mighty responsibilities.

The veil is very thin in the temples, especially when we join in worshipping through music. At temple dedications I have seen more tears of joy elicited by music than by the spoken word. I have read accounts of angelic choirs joining in these hymns of praise, and I think I have experienced this on several occasions. In dedicatory sessions featuring beautiful and well-trained choirs of about thirty voices, there are times when I have heard what seemed to be ten times thirty voices praising God with a quality and intensity of feeling that can be experienced but not explained. Some who are listening today will know what I mean.

All should participate in singing

Sacred music has a unique capacity to communicate our feelings of love for the Lord. This kind of communication is a wonderful aid to our worship. Many have difficulty expressing worshipful feelings in words, but all can join in communicating such feelings through the inspired words of our hymns.

When a congregation worships through singing, all present should participate. Here I share another experience. I had finished a special assignment on a Sunday morning in Salt Lake City and desired to attend a sacrament meeting. I stopped at a convenient ward meetinghouse and slipped unnoticed into the overflow area just as the congregation was beginning to sing these sacred words of the sacrament song:

’Tis sweet to sing the matchless love
Of Him who left his home above
And came to earth—oh, wondrous
plan—
To suffer, bleed, and die for man!
[“’Tis Sweet to Sing the Matchless
Love,” *Hymns*, no. 177]

My heart swelled as we sang this worshipful hymn and contemplated renewing our covenants by partaking of

the sacrament. Our voices raised the concluding strains:

For Jesus died on Calvary,
That all thru him might ransomed
be.
Then sing hosannas to his name;
Let heav'n and earth his love proclaim.

As we sang these words, I glanced around at members of the congregation and was stunned to observe that about a third of them were not singing. How could this be? Were those who did not even mouth the words suggesting that for them it was *not* "sweet to sing the matchless love" or to "sing hosannas to his name"? What are we saying, what are we thinking when we fail to join in singing in our worship services?

I believe some of us in North America are getting neglectful in our worship, including the singing of hymns. I have observed that the Saints elsewhere are more diligent in doing this. We in the center stakes of Zion should renew our fervent participation in the singing of our hymns.

Guidelines for worshipping through music

There are a few conventions all of us should observe as we worship through music. As we sing we should think about the messages of the words. Our hymns contain matchless doctrinal sermons, surpassed only by the scriptures in their truth and poetic impact.

We depend on our choristers and organists to lead us at the prescribed pace. Singing too slowly or too fast can detract from a worshipful mood.

We should be careful what music we use in settings where we desire to contribute to worship. Many musical numbers good for other wholesome settings are not appropriate for Church meetings.

Our hymns have been chosen because they have been proven effective to

invite the Spirit of the Lord. A daughter who plays the violin described that reality. "I love to play classical music," she said, "but when I play our hymns, I can just feel the Spirit of the Lord in my practice room."

Soloists should remember that music in our worship services is not for demonstration but for worship. Vocal or instrumental numbers should be chosen to facilitate worship, not to provide performance opportunity for artists, no matter how accomplished.

Our sacred music prepares us to be taught the truths of the gospel. This is why we are selective in the kinds of music and the kinds of instruments we use in our worship services. This is why we encourage our choirs to use the hymnbook as their basic resource. We can make selective use of other music that is in harmony with the spirit of our hymns, such as Charles Gounod's marvelous "O Divine Redeemer," sung at the funeral of President Ezra Taft Benson. But a hymnbook's hymn is often the most inspiring and appropriate musical selection for a choir, a vocalist, or an instrumentalist (see Michael F. Moody, "Conversation: Learning and Singing Hymns," *Ensign*, Aug. 1994, p. 79).

Sacred music can help us even where there is no formal performance. For example, when temptation comes, we can neutralize its effect by humming or repeating the words of a favorite hymn (see Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, pp. 21-26; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, pp. 25-28).

Singing with deaf members

Our hymns can work their miraculous effect even when the chorus of voices is few and even when hardly a sound can be heard. I felt this a few months ago as I participated in a musical performance that was unique in my church experience. I had been invited to speak at the Great Basin LDS Deaf

Conference, hosted by the Salt Lake Valley (Deaf) Ward of the Salt Lake Park Stake. Over three hundred deaf brothers and sisters were in attendance. The members of the stake presidency and I were almost the only adults in the congregation who could hear and who attempted to sing audibly. The rest of that large assembly sang with their hands. Hardly a lip moved, and hardly a sound was heard except the organ and four faint voices from the stand. In the audience, all hands moved in unison with the leader as the audience signed, "The Spirit of God like a fire is burning!" (*Hymns*, no. 2). As we sang together, the Spirit of the Lord descended upon us, and we were made ready for prayer. Our sacred music is a powerful preparation for prayer and gospel teaching.

Make better use of hymns

We need to make more use of our hymns to put us in tune with the Spirit of the Lord, to unify us, and to help us teach and learn our doctrine. We need to make better use of our hymns in missionary teaching, in gospel classes, in quorum meetings, in home evenings, and in home teaching visits. Music is an effective way to worship our Heavenly

Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. We should use hymns when we need spiritual strength and inspiration.

We who have "felt to sing the song of redeeming love" (Alma 5:26) need to keep singing that we may draw ever closer to him who has inspired sacred music and commanded that it be used to worship him. May we be diligent in doing so is my humble prayer, which I offer with a testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and of the divine calling of those we have sustained today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

Now as we demonstrate our acceptance of his message, the choir and congregation will join in singing "Come, Come, Ye Saints," following which we shall hear from Sister Michaelene P. Grassli, who was released this morning as general president of the Primary.

The chorus and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Sister Michaelene P. Grassli

It is a distinct privilege to participate in this historic meeting, adding my heart and hand and voice to sustain the Lord's living prophet—and I do so with all my heart. I support also the action taken today sustaining Sister Patricia Pinegar as the new Primary general president. My time here has been full of extraordinary experiences, and I will miss them. But I know Sister Pinegar, Sister Wirthlin, and Sister Warner, and I know our children

are in good hands. I wish this new presidency well.

Love and protect children

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has always cherished children. The First Presidency, recognizing today's unprecedented world conditions, has taken unprecedented action that renews our commitment to our little ones. Through a message to the Church called

"Focus on Children," they have asked us to love and protect our children as never before, to teach them better than we have done in the past, to prepare them more thoroughly to conquer Satan's power in their lives and to receive of the Lord's eternal peace and glory (see "Focus on Children," *Ensign*, Jan. 1994, p. 80).

We care what happens to our children. They are precious to our Heavenly Father, and they are our hope for bringing about good in the world. President Boyd K. Packer once told me, "It is today's children who will bring the gospel to all the world. The children must be powerful and strong and independent in their agency. In order for that to be, they must have a knowledge of the gospel and a testimony that it is true."

Let me tell you about a little girl who is well on her way. Eight-year-old Lindsay had studied well for her math test at school. She said, "When the test began, my friend leaned over and asked if I would help her with the answers. I thought of the family home evenings we have at the first of every school year. Dad reminds us that we should always do our own work. He says it's better to be honest than to cheat for a higher grade. I knew if I helped my friend cheat, I would be cheating too. So I shook my head, no. The next day, the teacher called my friend and me out into the hall and said our answers were the same. It was easy for me to look at the teacher and tell her I didn't cheat. When I looked at my friend, she was crying. She told the teacher she had looked on my paper. I was really sorry for my friend, but I was very glad I had been honest."

Discerning truth from error

Children need to be able to discern truth from error for themselves and have the courage to act on what they know, as Lindsay did. As I have studied principles

governing discernment, I've made some discoveries. One discovery comes from the book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price.

We read in the first chapter of Moses that God talked to Moses face to face, taught him that he was a son of God, and showed him the earth from its beginning to the end. Then "Satan came tempting him, saying: Moses, son of man, worship me" (v. 12).

And how did Moses respond to Satan's confrontation? "It came to pass that Moses looked upon Satan and said: Who art thou? For behold, I am a son of God, in the similitude of his Only Begotten; and where is thy glory, that I should worship thee?" (v. 13).

Because Moses knew God, he recognized that Satan was an imposter. If our children know truth, they can recognize error.

When Moses recognized error, he took action. He didn't hang around with Satan for the experience. No, he said, "I can judge between thee and God; . . . Get thee hence, Satan; deceive me not" (vv. 15-16).

He prayed for help and continued to do so, although Satan became agitated and insistent and redoubled his efforts, tempting Moses again. Satan told him, "I am the Only Begotten, worship me" (v. 19).

Moses knew this was not true, but Satan's rantings had a terrifying effect on him. However, he did not let fear overtake him. He prayed again, received strength from God, and commanded Satan again to depart. Then with loud wailing, weeping, and gnashing of teeth, Satan finally departed (see vv. 20-22).

Moses recognized error, he prayed continually for help, and he overcame fear. Thus he was able to defy Satan's attempts to intimidate him.

We want to enable our children to recognize error and take action as Moses did. This is much more than simply telling them what to think and what to

do. It is helping them seek for and love truth and choose independently to act according to it.

Teach children of Jesus and his gospel

Two ways we can do this are, first, teach them of Jesus Christ and the simple truths of his gospel. To do that we need to be with them so we can verbalize our beliefs to them and so they can watch us as we apply principles in our lives. Work time, playtime, planned lessons, the teaching moments that just happen—anytime is the time! Family home evening, family prayer, and times alone with each child will help plant truth in the hearts of our children.

Our children need to know that if we read the scriptures and the words of the prophets and heed the whisperings of the Spirit, we are learning from the source of all truth. If we oppose the Lord's appointed teachers of truth, then we oppose truth. But if we honestly desire to know what is true, it follows that we would want to learn from the source of truth.

Parents, use the support the Church offers you, including taking your children to Primary. Primary leaders and teachers can provide loving, supporting arms and hearts and unforgettable gospel lessons and activities for your children. They can help you immerse your children in truth.

With all my heart I thank each of you who are serving in Primary. You are blessing the children, and you are helping yourselves. President Hunter recently stated about Primary leaders and teachers:

"Those who have the opportunity to teach children in the Church are particularly blessed as they help children understand their divine origin and Heavenly Father's plan for them. These individuals will receive spiritual understanding in their own lives as they teach the precious truths of the gospel to children."

Help children practice discerning

A second way we can help children learn to discern truth from error is to give them opportunities to *practice* discerning the truth and choosing righteously.

One mother says each time one of her children leaves the house, "Remember!" And they respond, "I know, CTR!" They know CTR means "choose the right."

In family home evening, a family we know role-play situations they are likely to encounter, and they practice possible responses to the situations. In this way the children are able to have a plan before the confrontation comes. These children are learning to discern truth from error and to be independent in using their agency wisely.

When our children are familiar with truth, they can face opposing voices with confidence. No one can tell them the Church is not true, because that will sound wrong to them. When they make mistakes or have questions about doctrines, as we all do, the feelings and memories of truth from their childhood can help draw them back.

When I was a little girl, my father sat at the foot of my bed at night and taught my sister and me that we had lived with our Heavenly Father before the world was, that we had made a choice to obey God's commandments and to reject Satan. He taught us that Satan rejoices when we disobey Father. I made a determination then as a very young child that I wanted my Heavenly Father to rejoice over me, not Satan. That commitment has had a very powerful effect on my life.

I feel my Savior's love

May all our children be immersed in gospel teachings and have opportunities to practice using their agency wisely. I pray that all children will have the opportunity to know, as I do, that God lives, that Jesus Christ is our Savior, and

that we are led by a living prophet today. May the words to this favorite Primary song ring in their hearts as they do in mine today:

I feel my Savior's love
And know that he will bless me.
I offer him my heart;
My shepherd he will be.
He knows I will follow him,
Give all my life to him.
I feel my Savior's love,
The love he freely gives me.
["I Feel My Savior's Love," *Children's Songbook*, p. 74]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder David B. Haight

Solemn assemblies

From the depths of my soul I have prayed for the direction and influence of the Holy Ghost on this heaven-directed occasion. The proceedings have been most impressive as a new chapter of Church history begins.

Only a few months ago we mourned the death and loss of a great leader, President Ezra Taft Benson, who served a lifetime of faithful service, dedicating his time and inspired leadership to the building of God's kingdom here upon the earth and serving his countrymen with deep loyalty and concern for the nation's welfare. He has joined his eternal companion, Flora, and their other loved ones on the other side in a continuation of his foreordained calling.

Today we are witnesses to and participants in a most sacred occasion—a solemn assembly to act upon heavenly things. As in olden times, there has been much fasting and prayer offered by the Saints throughout the world that they may receive an outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord, which is so much in evidence here on this occasion this morning.

President Monson

We have just heard from Sister Michaelene P. Grassli, former general Primary president. She has served as a board member of the Primary, a counselor in the Primary presidency, and as president for a total of twenty years. We thank her and her wonderful counselors, Sister Jepsen and Sister Wright, and welcome to their opportunities our new Primary presidency.

Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

A solemn assembly, as the name implies, denotes a sacred, sober, and reverent occasion when the Saints assemble under the direction of the First Presidency. Solemn assemblies are used for three purposes: the dedication of temples, special instruction to priesthood leaders, and sustaining a new President of the Church. This conference session today is a solemn assembly for the purpose of sustaining a newly called Church President and other officers of the Church.

There is a pattern to solemn assemblies that distinguishes them from other general Church meetings where we sustain officers of the Church. That pattern, which was established by the Prophet Joseph Smith, is that the priesthood quorums, commencing with the First Presidency, stand and manifest by the uplifted right hand their willingness to sustain the President of the Church as a prophet, seer, and revelator, and uphold him by their confidence, faith, and prayers. The priesthood quorums of the Church so manifest by their vote. Then the general body of all the Saints stand and signify their willingness to do the

same. The other leaders of the Church are similarly sustained in their offices and callings.

Sustaining leaders—a solemn covenant

When we sustain the President of the Church by our uplifted hand, it not only signifies that we acknowledge before God that he is the rightful possessor of all the priesthood keys; it also means that we covenant with God that we will abide by the direction and the counsel that come through His prophet. It is a solemn covenant.

On the day the Church was organized, the Lord gave this commandment to the Church:

“For his [the Church president’s] word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

“For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name’s glory.

“For thus saith the Lord God: Him have I inspired to move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good” (D&C 21:5–7).

The first solemn assembly was held in the Kirtland Temple on 27 March 1836. Following the voting procedure that I described, the Prophet Joseph Smith recorded, “I prophesied to all, that inasmuch as they would uphold these men in their several stations, . . . the Lord would bless them; . . . in the name of [Jesus] Christ, the blessings of heaven should be theirs” (*History of the Church*, 2:418).

Today, by exercising the principle of common consent, we have expressed our will. How sacred is this privilege and responsibility? So sacred that in the great priesthood revelation, the Lord said that these matters “may be brought before a general assembly of the several quorums, *which constitute the spiritual authorities of the church*” (D&C 107:32; italics added).

Succession in the Presidency

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “Where [the President is] not, there is no First Presidency” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 106). Following the death of the President of the Church, the next ranking body, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, becomes the presiding authority. The president of the quorum becomes the *Acting* President of the Church until a new President of the Church is officially ordained and set apart in that office.

Our fifth article of faith declares, “We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.”

The revealed process by which Howard W. Hunter became the President of the Church began when he was called, ordained, and set apart to become a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—a call that was inspired of the Lord. That calling and ordination placed the newly called Apostle in a priesthood quorum with eleven other men who hold the apostleship.

Each Apostle is ordained under the direction of the President of the Church, who holds the keys of all of the kingdom of God. He gives to each new Apostle the priesthood authority necessary for him to hold every position in the Church.

We declare that the authority to administer in the name of God is operative in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today. We further testify that this power or commission was conferred on the first officers of the Church by ordination under the hands of those who held the same power in earlier dispensations. Joseph Smith received the keys of the apostleship from Peter, James, and John, the same who held the authority of the apostleship in the New Testament

times. This authority has come down from the Prophet Joseph Smith to President Howard W. Hunter.

False claims of apostolic authority

During the days of Joseph Smith, there were some who were pretenders to apostolic authority. One such was an elder who was sent by Joseph Smith to preach the gospel. It was not long until this elder proclaimed himself a high priest and said he had been ordained by an angel from heaven. He deceived some Church members. He was called back to Ohio by the Prophet Joseph Smith and questioned about his claims. He soon confessed that he had lied, and he begged forgiveness. Orson Hyde, one of the Twelve Apostles, recorded the principle that the Prophet then taught all those who were assembled in the School of the Prophets:

"No true angel from God will ever come to ordain any man, because they have once been sent to establish the priesthood by ordaining me thereunto; . . . the priesthood being once established on earth, with power to ordain others, no heavenly messenger will ever come to interfere with that power by ordaining any more. . . . You may therefore know, from this time forward, that if any man comes to you professing to be ordained by an angel, he is either a liar or has been imposed upon in consequence of transgression by an angel of the devil, for this priesthood shall never be taken away from this church" ("Although Dead, Yet He Speaketh," *Millennial Star*, 20 Nov. 1846, p. 139).

In later years another Apostle, Elder George Q. Cannon, reaffirmed that principle to the Church. Quoting Brother Cannon:

"God, having once bestowed the keys of the holy Priesthood on man here on the earth for the up-building of His Church, will never take them from the man or men who hold them [who lead

the Church] and *authorize others to bestow them*" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:47; italics added).

The instructions by the Prophet Joseph Smith and Elder George Q. Cannon should be a warning and testimony to any pretender who claims apostolic authority on the basis that he has been visited by angels. It should also be a warning to anyone who may be so deceived as to follow these false shepherds.

President Hunter is truly Christlike

We have sustained as God's prophet on earth a kind, sensitive servant of God—Howard William Hunter. He is a humble, faithful, scholarly, and gentle soul, one who has experienced deep sorrow and suffered serious infirmities and even a threat upon his life, but, with his Scottish ancestral determination, has never given in or given up.

How tenderly he cared for his Claire during her illness, sitting by her bedside night after night, caring for her every need. We are witnesses of President Hunter's deep sorrow and loneliness in the slow losing of his eternal companion.

President Hunter understands compassion, thankfulness, graciousness, charity, and gratitude toward individuals and toward mankind, and he has the saintly bearing of a prophet of God. He, in my estimation, is truly Christlike.

Service as bishop and stake president

More than forty years ago he was ordained as a new bishop in Southern California. In his blessing he was promised, "You shall be known as an honest, just and honorable bishop among the members of [your] ward—and in future years, these members will come to you with tears . . . and thank you for your blessings, and your guiding hand, and the administration of the work you are now called upon to do" (quoted in Eleanor Knowles, *Howard W. Hunter* [Salt Lake

City: Deseret Book Co., 1994], p. 101). That blessing has proven true.

In February 1950, Bishop Howard W. Hunter was called to be the new stake president of the Pasadena California Stake by Elders Stephen L. Richards and Harold B. Lee. President Hunter not only served his stake members with distinction but assisted the expanding Church in many priesthood leadership assignments in welfare, education, and missionary opportunities, and he had a significant role in the building of the Los Angeles Temple.

President Hunter's leadership and strong moral values were recognized as a powerful influence in the Church organization, which he loves, and also in the Los Angeles civic community.

Special witness of Jesus Christ

The calling to the apostleship was issued to Brother Hunter by President David O. McKay in October 1959. On that occasion President McKay said to him, "The Lord has spoken. You are called to be one of his special witnesses, and tomorrow you will be sustained as a member of the Council of the Twelve" (quoted in Knowles, *Howard W. Hunter*, p. 144).

A prophet is one who knows by personal revelation from the Holy Ghost that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, for "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," as the Prophet Joseph taught us (Revelation 19:10; see also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 119). Thus every prophet bears record of Jesus Christ.

The sermons, writings, and teachings of him whom we have sustained this day attest that he is indeed a prophet and a special witness of our Lord and Savior. I quote from one of President Howard Hunter's many public statements of testimony of our Lord and Savior that he has offered to the Church and to the world. President Hunter declared:

"As one called and ordained to bear witness of the name of Jesus Christ to all the world, I testify . . . that he lives. He has a glorified, immortal body of flesh and bones. He is the Only Begotten Son of the Father in the flesh. He is the Savior, the Light and Life of the world. Following his crucifixion and death, he appeared as a resurrected being to Mary, to Peter, to Paul, and to many others. He showed himself to the Nephites. He has shown himself to Joseph Smith, the boy prophet, and to many others in our dispensation. This is his church; he leads it today" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, p. 19; or *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 17).

So testified at that time President Hunter. And so I have the honor and privilege on this day to testify of President Hunter. With all my heart and every fiber of my body, I support, sustain, and express my love to President Howard W. Hunter as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—and to the noble men, President Gordon B. Hinckley and President Thomas S. Monson, who stand by his side in the First Presidency. All are great men of God—faithful and fearless—who, as inspired servants of God, will lead the Church forward, on to greater heights and expansion throughout the world.

I bear this testimony to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Praise to the Man."

President Monson

Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Praise to the Man."

Elder L. Tom Perry, also of the Council of the Twelve, will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Sister Grassli, on behalf of my grandchildren and hundreds of thousands of other great young people we have in the Church, whom you've led so faithfully with such inspiration, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Sustaining Church leaders

April 6, 1830, is a significant date for Latter-day Saints. It is the day The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. The translation and printing of the Book of Mormon had been completed, the priesthood had been restored, and now the Lord directed that His church should again be organized here on the earth.

Prospective members of the Church gathered at the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in Fayette, New York, for this special occasion. The meeting was simple. Joseph Smith, then twenty-four years of age, called the group to order and designated five associates to join with him in satisfying New York's legal requirements for the incorporation of a religious society. After kneeling in solemn prayer, Joseph Smith proposed that he and Oliver Cowdery be called as teachers and spiritual advisers to the newly organized Church. Everyone raised his right arm to the square, and the pattern of sustaining Church leadership was established.

At that meeting the revelation contained in the twenty-first section of the Doctrine and Covenants was received. In that revelation the Lord said to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ,

"Being inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof, and to build it up unto the most holy faith" (D&C 21:1-2).

Today we have had the opportunity of raising our right arms to the square and sustaining Howard W. Hunter as our President. This is a historic occasion, as well as an opportunity to contemplate the blessing it is to have a prophet of God to lead us. I believe we should pause at the conclusion of this memorable session to remember what it means to sustain a President of the Church as a seer and a prophet.

The President is a seer

First, the title of seer. Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and many others were seers. They were seers because they were blessed with a clearer vision of divine glory and power than other mortals.

Perhaps the best description we have of a seer is in the Book of Mormon when Ammon finds the land of Lehi-Nephi. There was much rejoicing in the land at the arrival of Ammon. King Limhi addressed his people and called on Ammon to rehearse what had happened to their brethren since they had been separated. Then King Limhi sent his people to their homes and requested that the plates containing a record of his people from the time they had left Zarahemla be brought before Ammon that he might read them. As soon as Ammon had read the record, the king inquired of him if he could interpret languages from other records he had in his possession, and Ammon told him he could not. Then Ammon said:

"I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the records; for he has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. . . .

"And the king said that a seer is greater than a prophet.

"And Ammon said that a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have, except he should possess the power of God, which no man can; yet a man may have great power given him from God.

"But a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known" (Mosiah 8:13, 15-17).

The President is a prophet

What does it mean to be a prophet? The word *prophet* in the Greek language means "inspired teacher" (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992], 3:1164). In Hebrew the word *prophet* means "one who announces or brings a message from God." According to Elder John A. Widtsoe:

"A prophet is a teacher. That is the essential meaning of the word. He teaches the body of truth, the gospel, revealed by the Lord to man; and under inspiration explains it to the understanding of the people. He is an expounder of truth. Moreover, he shows that the way to human happiness is through obedience to God's law. He calls to repentance those who wander away from the truth. He becomes a warrior for the consummation of the Lord's purposes with respect to the human family. The purpose of his life is to uphold the Lord's plan of salvation. All this he does by close communion with the Lord until he is 'full of power by the spirit of the Lord'" (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, comp. G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960], p. 257).

Father's experience with Joseph F. Smith

While my father attended LDS High School, he worked and lived in the home of President Joseph F. Smith. He wrote in his life history about President Smith:

"Most great men that I have known have been deflated by intimate contact. Not so with the prophet Joseph F. Smith. Each common everyday act added inches to his greatness. To me he was a prophet even while washing his hands or untying his shoes."

My father tells of one experience in which the prophet taught him a practical lesson late one night as he entered the Beehive House. Again quoting from my father's life history:

"I walked with guarded steps through the office, then into the private study to the door at the foot of the steps that led to my bedroom. But the door would not open. I pushed and I pushed to no avail. Finally I gave up and went back to a rug that I had noticed in the hall with the intention of sleeping there until morning.

"In the darkness I bumped against another partially opened door and the collision awakened the prophet. He turned on the light and, seeing who it was, came down the stairway and inquired concerning my difficulty.

"The door is locked that leads to my room," I explained. He went to the door and pulled instead of pushed, and the door opened. Had he been disturbed by my foolish blunder I would not have been surprised, for I had robbed him of a precious night's sleep by a thoughtless act. He only smiled and stopped to inquire of a strange stable boy what I had stumbled into. I pointed to the half open door at the other end of the hall.

"Let me show you something," He took time at midnight to explain, "When in the dark, never go groping with hands parted and outstretched; that permits doors to get by your guard and hit you. Keep your arms in front, but hands together; then you will feel with your

hands and not your head.' I thanked him and moved to my quarters. He waited until I reached the rear stairway and then he retired."

A prophet teaches and guides

Isn't a prophet someone who teaches us to open doors we could not open ourselves—doors to greater light and truth? Isn't a prophet like a pair of hands clasped together in front of the body of the Church, helping members navigate through the dark corridors of the world? Isn't a prophet someone who watches and waits for us patiently while we get to where we need to be?

Never has there been a time when the written and spoken word can descend upon us from so many different sources. Through the media we find analysts analyzing the analysts, almost overwhelming us with opinions and different views.

What a comfort it is to know that the Lord keeps a channel of communication open to His children through the prophet. What a blessing it is to know we have a voice we can trust to declare the will of the Lord. As the prophet Amos taught, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

A prophet keeps the doctrine pure

The Lord surely understood the need to keep His doctrines pure and to trust their interpretation to only one source. Of course, we are all admonished to study and gain as much knowledge as we can possibly obtain in this life. We are encouraged to discuss and exchange ideas one with another to further our understanding. However, the Lord has only one source for the declaration of His basic fundamental doctrines. Even as General Authorities of the Church, we are instructed, "In order

to preserve the uniformity of doctrinal and policy interpretation, you are asked to refer to the Office of the First Presidency for consideration [of] any doctrinal or policy questions which are not clearly defined in the scriptures or in the *General Handbook of Instructions*."

In this way, conflict and confusion and differing opinions are eliminated.

President Brigham Young has assured us we can have complete confidence in the prophets. He said:

"The Lord Almighty leads this Church, and he will never suffer you to be led astray if you are found doing your duty. You may go home and sleep as sweetly as a babe in its mother's arms, as to any danger of your leaders leading you astray, for if they should try to do so the Lord would quickly sweep them from the earth. Your leaders are trying to live their religion as far as [they are] capable of doing so" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:289).

The good spirit of President Hunter

Today, by sustaining a new prophet, we have placed ourselves under solemn covenant to heed his voice. The Lord has designated Howard W. Hunter as our prophet, seer, and revelator.

An illustration of the spirit of President Hunter occurred at the conclusion of a regional conference at BYU's Marriott Center as he was exiting the building through the west tunnel. This was the period when he was just beginning to stand again and use his walker, but he was still a little unsteady. My son Lee and three of his children had attended the conference, and they were also exiting the Marriott Center through the west tunnel. As Lee and his children moved up the tunnel, his son Justin, who was wandering more left and right than in a straight line, drew dangerously close to President Hunter. Lee cautioned Justin, "Don't get in President Hunter's way." President Hunter stopped

for only a moment, turned his head around, smiled, and with a twinkle in his eye said, "Nothing gets in my way."

Follow President Hunter, our prophet

How typical of President Hunter. His life's story is filled with accounts of determination, accomplishment, faith, and true Christian love. He is an inspiration to all of us. He is our prophet. We sit at his feet ready to feast on the wisdom of this true and faithful servant-leader. We stand ready to heed his voice because we know he speaks for the Lord.

May God bless us that we may follow him who has been called to be our prophet, seer, and revelator. I give witness that divine intervention has preserved and prepared President Hunter for this great and important responsibility. He is the Lord's servant. Of this I testify in the name of Him whose church this is, even our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Perry, for that stirring message and testimony. Elder Perry is a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and has been our concluding speaker for this solemn assembly session of the conference.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of the conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing "O My Father." The benediction will be given by Elder C. Max Caldwell of the Seventy, and the conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

The chorus sang "O My Father."

Elder C. Max Caldwell offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 164th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 1, 1994, at 2:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Primary children's choir from the Kaysville Utah Region, with Sister Vanja Y. Watkins conducting and Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the Primary choir sang "Because God Loves Me" and "Thank Thee for Everything." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, President Howard W. Hunter, who this morning was sustained in the solemn assembly as the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, presides at this conference and has asked that I conduct this session.

We welcome you to the second session of the 164th Semiannual General Conference of the Church. We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance and who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We note that Elders L. Tom Perry, F. Burton Howard, and J Ballard Washburn are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Vaughn J. Featherstone and Earl C. Tingey are attending the overflow gathering in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

The music for this session will be provided by this beautiful Primary children's choir from the Kaysville Utah Region, under the direction of Sister Vanja Y. Watkins, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Because God Loves Me" and "Thank Thee for Everything." They will now sing "The Light Divine." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy.

The choir sang "The Light Divine."
Elder Spencer J. Condie offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

Sister Watkins will lead this choir again in singing "Home" and "Love Is Spoken Here."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Home" and "Love Is Spoken Here."

Elder Robert D. Hales

Our personal testimonies

My beloved brothers and sisters, this morning was a historic occasion. It was a great honor and privilege to join with you in a solemn assembly to sustain President Howard W. Hunter as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

When we raise our hands to sustain the prophet, it is important for each of us to have a personal testimony that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ, who leads his church today through the prophet he has chosen.

Our testimony comes by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost. The testimony received and carried within us enables us to hold a steady course in times of prosperity and to overcome doubt and fear in times of adversity. Each of us needs to know what a testimony is, how we can get it, and what our responsibilities are once we have received a testimony.

What is a testimony?

A testimony is the spirit of prophecy (see Revelation 19:10). It is a personal revelation from God, revealing the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A testimony comes through the Holy Ghost; it makes a deep and lasting impression on the soul.

Individual testimonies are the foundation and strength of the Church. Our testimony provides a guiding light that leads to a commitment which directs our conduct and our way of life. Our testimony is true north on a spiritual compass. It is a moving force that cannot be seen but can truly be felt. It is a burning within that tells us what is right. It is when "your heart tells you things your mind doesn't know" (Harold B. Lee, "Be Loyal to the Royal within You," in *Speeches of the Year, 1972-73* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1973], p. 101).

Our testimony is the fruit of obedience in the form of peace, joy, and un-

derstanding in our hearts of gospel principles. A testimony is a shield of faith “wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (D&C 27:17).

Our testimony is a measurement of our faith. Faith is testimony; testimony is faith. Having a strong testimony allows us to help others in their search for truth. Our testimony is a gift from God. It should be shared, but we do not have the authority to bestow a testimony upon someone else, because a personal testimony is granted by the Holy Ghost. It can aid others in gaining knowledge for themselves—a knowledge abiding in the heart that leaves no room for doubt.

Our testimony is a knowledge of who we are—a child of God, where we came from—the presence of our Heavenly Father, and where we are going eternally if we are faithful—back into the presence of our Heavenly Father. We must each gain such a testimony if we are to withstand the trials and adversities of mortality and go on to the glorious eternal future we all desire.

The prophets’ testimonies

Today we rejoice in sustaining a new President of the Church. President Hunter declared:

“My greatest strength through these past hours and recent days has been my abiding testimony that this is the work of God and not men, that Jesus Christ is the authorized and living head of this church and He leads it in word and deed” (quoted in *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 4).

What do we learn about testimony from the lives and teachings of the prophets of God? We learn that a testimony is very personal. We can each gain a testimony of the truth through the Holy Ghost.

Fourteen men have presided over The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in this dispensation. Every one of them has had an unshakable tes-

timony of the reality of God, the divine sonship of Jesus Christ, the truth of the gospel, the Book of Mormon, and the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith. How did they receive their testimonies? Can we obtain a testimony in the same way?

How Joseph Smith gained a testimony

We are familiar with the vision received by the Prophet Joseph Smith and how he obtained his testimony of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. Joseph had serious reflection about religions of his time. He read in the scriptures that if he lacked wisdom, he could ask of God, and wisdom would be given to him. The passage of scripture found in James 1:5 came to his heart with great power and feeling. Joseph reflected on the scripture again and again. He retired to the woods to express in humble prayer the desire of his heart, to do as James directed—to ask of God.

As we humbly testify to the world, there appeared to Joseph in answer to his prayer the very Eternal God of heaven and earth and His Only Begotten Son, who is the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. They appeared to this young man, who in the eyes of the world seemed to be a common lad, revealing in a few brief moments more truth about the nature of God than was had among all the churches and professions of belief in the entire world. The boy prophet, Joseph, now knew that God the Father and Jesus Christ were separate personages. Each had a body of flesh and bones. They could indeed reveal themselves to their chosen prophets just as they did to the prophets in ancient times. Living testimony, personal revelation, is the foundation stone of true religion.

Joseph Smith sealed his testimony with his own blood. The Prophet’s martyrdom was a voluntary acceptance of death to seal the testimony of the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Cov-

enants (see D&C 135:1) and to bear holy witness of Jesus Christ and his gospel in this dispensation. We do not give our testimony and lives in the manner that Joseph Smith, the martyred Prophet, gave his life. Rather, we give testimony by devoted service in our lives each day to lift and strengthen others.

How other prophets gained testimonies

The prophets who followed Joseph Smith in this dispensation each obtained their own testimonies by the same basic principles with individual application. If we consider their lives carefully, we can discover the process by which testimony comes. For example, President Brigham Young received a testimony of the truth of the Book of Mormon after two years of studious consideration. President John Taylor required only three weeks to discover that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ embodied the true religion that existed anciently as recorded in the Bible and now again restored to the earth. President Wilford Woodruff searched diligently for six years before finding the truth. He finally found it in the teachings and testimony of two Mormon missionaries. President Lorenzo Snow was the fifth President of the Church. When he met the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1831, he wrote, "A light arose in my understanding which has never been extinguished" (quoted in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992], 3:1367).

How David O. McKay gained a testimony

President David O. McKay was the ninth President of the Church. In his boyhood he desired to know, as Joseph Smith had known, of the reality of God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. One day while herding cattle in the foothills near his home, he sought a testimony through prayer. He said:

"I dismounted, threw my reins over my horse's head, and there under a serviceberry bush I prayed that God would declare to me the truth of his revelation to Joseph Smith" (quoted in *New Era*, Jan. 1972, p. 56).

He prayed fervently and sincerely with as much faith as he could find within him. When he finished his prayer, he waited for an answer. Nothing seemed to happen. Disappointed, he rode slowly on, saying to himself at the time, "No spiritual manifestation has come to me. If I am true to myself, I must say I am just the same 'old boy' that I was before I prayed" (p. 56).

A direct answer to this prayer was many years in coming. While serving a mission in Scotland, Elder McKay received a powerful spiritual manifestation. He later commented: "Never before had I experienced such an emotion. . . . It was a manifestation for which as a doubting youth I had secretly prayed most earnestly on hillside and in meadow. It was an assurance to me that sincere prayer is answered 'sometime, somewhere'" (quoted in Francis M. Gibbons, *David O. McKay* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1986], p. 50).

Each of the prophets has testified of the personal revelation by which he came to know the truthfulness of the gospel and of the spiritual strength of such revelation.

How to gain a sure testimony

People often ask me, "How do you know? How can you know that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ?" While there seems to be no exact formula by which each of us receives a testimony, there does seem to be a discernable pattern. Though prayer is important in gaining a testimony, we cannot merely ask in prayer for a testimony and expect it to be given immediately to us.

Generally, testimony emerges over time and through life's experiences. We

can compare testimony to the process of watching a photograph develop. Powerful impressions of the Spirit come like flashes of light on receptive photographic film. Like the chemicals needed to develop the picture, certain spiritual conditions and experiences are needed in our lives for our personal testimony to develop into a certain truth and knowledge. And like a photograph, a testimony, if not carefully preserved, will fade with time.

Testimonies often come when there is willingness to serve where we are called. They come when a decision is made to strive to be obedient. Testimonies come during efforts to help, lift, and strengthen others. They come from prayer and from studying the scriptures and applying them in our lives. Whatever our circumstances, there seem to be moments in each of our lives when we can be given the knowledge that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ. There is no greater search in life that we can embark upon than the quest to gain a testimony of the truth.

While each of our lives is different, I believe we can, with some confidence, outline from the testimony of others, such as the prophets, and our own personal experience the process and phases we go through to gain a testimony:

Have a sincere desire to know the truth and express that desire in humble prayer to our Heavenly Father. "If ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you" (Alma 32:27).

Search the scriptures. Continue to pray. The scriptures are filled with the testimonies of those who have gone before. Even they, though long dead, can reach your heart and bring peace to your mind and direction to your life.

Search and ponder the truths you are learning about gospel principles. Think about them. Test them with further prayer. Relate them to what you know and feel. All the truths you will learn

can eventually fit together into a fervent, undoubting testimony.

Be humble and receptive. Have ears to hear when Heavenly Father leads us to someone who can teach us about the gospel of Jesus Christ. This may be a teacher, family member, neighbor, friend, or acquaintance. It might be a missionary who contacts us through tracting or referral. But know that once we pray, study, and have faith with a desire to learn spiritual matters, the Lord will provide a way for us to gain further light and knowledge.

Live your testimony. We must obediently follow the Savior's teachings and the prophets' examples. Our testimony and example will assist others who are searching for the truth.

Share your testimony. "O that I were an angel," proclaimed Alma, "and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God" (Alma 29:1). Let others know that you know. Bear your testimony in fast meeting. Tell your family; tell your friends. You will find when you share your testimony it becomes stronger, and there are many others around you who also want to embrace the truth.

Be willing to endure the test of time. Do not think that it is easy to maintain a testimony. Others will test you. Sometimes they will point the finger of mockery and scorn. Sometimes they may persecute you openly. Be prepared. Know in advance that the best of God's children have had the courage of true conviction and were willing to suffer ridicule, deprivation, and even death for the sake of true testimony. Is each of us willing to do likewise?

The fruits of a testimony

In our day, those blessed with a testimony of the truth have a shield of faith that will protect them from the fiery darts of the adversary at the hands of critics and detractors. We should not

let others determine our faithfulness and affect our testimony and ultimately our eternal salvation.

Doubts about matters of religion that arise from a lack of knowledge can be constructively resolved. The solutions are instruction, study, and prayer, which result in increased testimony, which drives out further doubts.

Years ago Elder Howard W. Hunter spoke to the youth regarding their testimony:

"I have sympathy for young men and young women when honest doubts enter their minds and they engage in the great conflict of resolving doubts. These doubts can be resolved, if [youth] have an honest desire to know the truth, by exercising moral, spiritual, and mental effort. They will emerge from the conflict into a firmer, stronger, larger faith because of the struggle. They have gone from a simple, trusting faith, through doubt and conflict, into a solid substantial faith which ripens into testimony" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1960, p. 108).

The fruits of testimony may be observed in the lives of the faithful. Those lifted by the power of testimony can find greater happiness and fidelity in marriage. Their testimonies are an antidote to the plague of divorce. They enjoy greater freedom, seldom enslaved to alcohol, tobacco, drugs, abuse, and other forms of self-indulgence. They find strength to deal with the problems of life.

Each of us will be tested, tempted, and tried for our testimonies and to find out if we will remain true and faithful through these trials of our faith.

We also know, beloved brothers and sisters, that if we do not continue faithful in the testimony that is imparted to us by the Spirit, then the light dwindles until it is extinguished. A testimony must be constantly nourished and defended, or it will waste away.

To the other testimonies borne this day, I wish to add my own testimony in the strongest and most direct manner possible. I know that God lives. I bear witness to the reality and divinity of his Son, Jesus Christ, who leads this church and reveals the word of the Father to our generation. I bear my testimony to the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, the eternal nature of the priesthood, the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the assurance that God has again spoken through a living prophet in President Howard W. Hunter, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

Elder Horacio A. Tenorio, who was released as a member of the Seventy this morning, will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Hartman Rector Jr., who received emeritus status in this morning's session.

Elder Horacio A. Tenorio

Satan's efforts to corrupt youth

In our world of escalating crisis, where the fraternal wars, corruption, secret combinations, and immorality are reminiscent of the wickedness described in the Book of Mormon, Satan has in-

tensified his efforts to destroy the family by corrupting the youth and robbing childhood of its innocence.

Our youth are especially vulnerable as the enemy cunningly utilizes every means at his disposal, including the mass media and changes in constitutional law,

to deceive them. He bombards our homes with enticements of destructive and harmful products and morals through television, videos, press, books, and so forth.

Parental responsibilities

We as Latter-day Saints and all good people anywhere must conscientiously screen what comes into our homes. Parents have the inalienable right and the responsibility to educate their children. No inappropriate outsider should be allowed to dictate our family's values nor what our children are being taught.

The gospel is based on the principle of agency, and our Heavenly Father has made us responsible for raising our families in such a way that they can be saved and return to his presence. In section 68 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 25, the Lord tells us, "Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, . . . the sin be upon the heads of the parents."

Make our homes fortresses

In medieval times, great fortresses were built around castles or cities to protect them from enemy attacks. In the Book of Mormon, the Nephites built fortresses to defend their families against their enemies. We must make of our homes fortresses to protect our families against the constant attacks of the adversary.

I am not suggesting that we isolate ourselves from the world by digging deep moats or constructing barriers several meters high around our homes, but rather that in our family councils, under the influence of the Spirit, we establish the activities, entertainment,

books, friendships, rules, and habits that will constitute our fortresses.

Our fortress consists of teaching our children the gospel through the scriptures, establishing the habit of reading them every day as a family, and basing a large part of our conversations on them. It means kneeling together daily to pray and to teach our children the importance of direct, personal communication with our Heavenly Father.

Our fortress is erected by showing our children, through our example, that the principles and teachings of the gospel are a way of life that helps us find peace and happiness on this earth and provides the strength necessary to withstand the trials and tribulations that come into our lives. We must teach our children to avoid compromising themselves with inappropriate fashions and negative practices of the world by simply saying no when confronted with them.

Creating a fortress requires the family to counsel together in weekly family home evenings, where they make decisions and agreements.

Establish a security system

In ancient times a fortress required regular inspections to ensure that no weak spots developed that an enemy could take advantage of, and guards in the watchtowers ensured that no enemy could approach undetected. In other words, once a city was fortified, a constant effort was made to maintain the fortress so that it could serve its purpose.

By establishing a security system of our own, we can prevent the enemy from finding and exploiting weaknesses in our family fortress through which he could gain access to, and harm, our most precious treasure, our family.

Father's interviews

One of the watchtowers on our fortress can be the regular habit of a father's

interview with each member of his family. Personal interviews are an important resource in maintaining the integrity of our fortress. Through them we become better acquainted with our children, learn about their problems and concerns, and establish open communication and trust that will enable us to foresee any danger, help them make decisions, and support them during difficult times. Our Heavenly Father has given us as parents the stewardship of caring for and protecting our families. It is a responsibility that we cannot and must not delegate.

In Doctrine and Covenants section 93, verses 39 and 40, it says:

"And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.

"But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth."

A loving interview guided by the Spirit can give direction to our children's lives, bring about necessary adjustments or changes, and may even result in miracles.

Interviewing a young grandson

I wish to share with you a very special family experience. This is an interview I had with my grandson. Several years ago, when I was preparing myself spiritually in prayer to interview one of my daughters, I felt inspired to interview Kemish, my grandson who was a little over three years old and was living with us. Kemish was a bundle of energy and could not stay quiet for more than a minute, always running, jumping, and playing. So I let that feeling pass, thinking that I would wait until he was a little older and able to pay attention.

Several months later, while praying, the feeling came again; only this time it was stronger, and I heeded it. I went to Kemish and told him, "Tomorrow you and I will have an interview." The next day, at the beginning of the interview, I told him that during an interview we had to look each other in the eye and remain seated all the time, among other things. It was a real miracle; Kemish sat and stayed quiet for almost ten minutes. But more marvelous than that, however, was that I got to know his thoughts and feelings. The thing that worried him the most was when he could get a two-wheel bicycle. When I explained to him that he would have to wait until he was a little older, he understood perfectly. He then told me the story he had learned about Nephi and his brothers. But the greatest thrill for me, as his grandfather, was when he told me that he knew who Jesus Christ was and bore his testimony of the Savior to me. Nowhere could you ever find more truth and purity than in the testimony of a three-year-old boy.

I can picture an interview with my Heavenly Father before coming to this earth—an interview in which he called to me and spoke to me, showing me what he had in store for me. It must have been a tender interview with a loving Father who was about to let his son go for a time. I anxiously await my next interview.

I know we have a loving Father who is waiting for us. I know that he instructs us through his Only Begotten, our Savior and Redeemer. I know that his church and his gospel are real fortresses which will give peace and security to our most precious treasure on this earth, our family. Of this I testify in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Hartman Rector Jr.

Receiving emeritus status

When a Seventy of the First Quorum becomes seventy years old, he becomes emeritus. Or you can call it "emeritis." It's in the air; all you have to do is keep breathing and you'll get it. It seems that just about everything I do of late, I am doing for the last time, and so it is with speaking in general conference.

I can't say that this is doing any particular violence to my sensitivities, however, because I have never felt particularly comfortable in this position behind this microphone anyway.

I do appreciate the opportunity to express my love to my Brethren, most of whom I have seen called, and to all the many strong Saints all over the world whom I have had the privilege to know and serve with.

Yes, the gospel of Jesus Christ does truly make us brothers and sisters and a great family of Jesus Christ as we seek to follow him and become his sons and his daughters (see John 1:12; Ether 3:14).

Story of conversion

As most of you are aware, I am a convert to the Church, having been baptized in Tokyo, Japan, back in 1952 while serving in the U.S. Navy during the Korean conflict. I was born and reared in Missouri, where much of the early history of this church took place. But I had never heard anything about the Mormon church. I was looking for the truth, and although I had read the Bible and believed that Jesus Christ had lived on the earth and had been resurrected, yet I had so many unanswered questions—questions such as: Why doesn't God speak to man today as he did anciently when the Bible was being written? How can Jesus be his own father and the Holy Ghost too? Why did Jesus have to be

baptized when he had no sin? Where was I before I was born, and where do I go when I die? How can just believing in Christ save me when I haven't kept God's Ten Commandments?

I knew there must be answers that I had not heard. The answers came when Elders Ted Raban and Ronald Flygare knocked on my door in San Diego, California, in July 1951. My wife, Connie, let them in and accepted a copy of the Book of Mormon from them. I was in Hawaii at the time, attending a fourteen-week training course preparatory to deployment to Korea.

When I returned home, Connie gave me a copy of the Book of Mormon, and I began to read. I knew the book was true before I had finished 2 Nephi—Nephi had converted one more—and began to attend church in the old Valencia Park Ward in San Diego. Because of my preparation for deployment, I was not able to study and attend church as I wanted to and longed for the time when I could. The time came aboard the aircraft carrier *Philippine Seas*, where I read fourteen of the best books that have ever been written. They included the standard works of the Church, plus the writings of each of the Presidents of the Church from Joseph Smith Jr. to David O. McKay, plus Parley P. and Orson Pratt and a few others. I was like a starving man who had found food and drink for the first time. I loved it.

When we arrived in Japan, the LDS group aboard ship decided I should be baptized. So we traveled to the Tokyo mission home, where I requested baptism. I was informed that I had not been an investigator for the required one-year time period; therefore, I could not be baptized. However, I persisted. I asked to be interviewed. The interview took an hour and a half, but in the end I received a recommend for baptism and confirma-

tion. McDonald B. Johnson, the LDS group leader on the *Philippine Seas*, baptized me, and Fred Gaylord Peterson confirmed me, and I became a member of the Church on February 26, 1952. I was ordained a deacon that day and subsequently to another office in the priesthood each time the ship returned to Japan, until on July 26, 1952, I was ordained an elder and returned to San Diego in August, where my wife had been baptized on March 1 of that same year. We were a united family in the gospel of Jesus Christ and were looking forward with much anticipation to being sealed together with our three children in the Mesa Arizona Temple, which happened in May 1953.

Sixteen years after baptism, I was called by President David O. McKay to be a member of the First Council of the Seventy. That was in April of 1968. I was the first convert to be called as a General Authority since John Morgan, a period of eighty-six years. I have served in this capacity for twenty-six years.

Repent of sins

I have found the gospel to be very simple but also very profound. Once we have sufficient faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that we believe he has paid for our sins, then we will repent. And no one truly repents until he believes in Christ.

You see, there is a difference between stopping sinning and repentance. In the first instance we are still guilty; in the second we are free of the sin and guilt. People stop sinning all the time because they are afraid they will get AIDS or die of lung cancer or some other reason, but they do not get rid of their sins. That can happen only when a nonmember follows Jesus Christ down into the waters of baptism, then comes forth and receives the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands by priesthood authority. That's how we get clean before the Lord (see D&C 84:74).

Again, in the first instance we are still in our sins, but in the second instance we are free from our sins. The word of the Father to Nephi was "Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son." Then Nephi reports he heard a voice from the Father saying, "Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (2 Nephi 31:11, 15).

Endure to the end

Then after baptism by the water and the Spirit, it appears that all the Father requires of us is that we endure to the end. What does that mean? I believe it means basically three things.

One: We must continue to repent for the rest of our lives because we will still make mistakes, and we must go home clean or we can't dwell with the Father and the Son (see D&C 84:74).

Two: We must continue to forgive others. If we do not forgive others, we cannot obtain forgiveness ourselves (see D&C 64:9-10).

And three: Yes, we must be nice. If we're not nice, I don't think we're going to make it. In other words, we must have charity, which is really love plus sacrifice. We must serve our fellowmen, women, and children, and if we do all else but we do not serve the poor, the needy, the downtrodden, the oppressed, the sick and afflicted, both temporally and spiritually, according to their wants, we cannot retain a remission of our sins from day to day. Without serving others, we cannot "walk guiltless before God" (Mosiah 4:26).

It is a fact that God is no respecter of persons. He loves all of his children, and I believe he loves them equally. Of course, he cannot bless his children if they do not keep his commandments, for he has said:

"There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this

world, upon which *all* blessings are predicated—

“And when we obtain *any* blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:20–21; italics added).

God tells us he cannot deny his words. Quite obviously he is much more pleased with us when we keep his commandments, and he delights to bless us when we do. But if we do not keep his commandments, he will chasten us. It does not mean that he doesn’t love us, any more than when parents discipline children. In fact, it is because he *does* love us that he chastens us so we might learn obedience (see Hebrews 12:6; D&C 95:1).

Love and serve others

Then to walk guiltless before God, we must love and serve others. His statement through King Benjamin that “when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17), I believe, can properly be turned around to say that “unless you *are* in the service of your fellow beings you are *not* in the service of your God.” Mormon expressed this thought, which was recorded by his son Moroni, when he said:

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. . . .

“ . . . And whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him. . . .

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7:46–48).

I am persuaded that only this charity—this pure love of Christ, this love plus sacrifice, which is exemplified in the work that goes on in our temples—can save this nation (and the world, for that matter) when the Lord comes. The Lord was willing to spare Sodom and Gomorrah if Abraham could find just ten good men, which he could not do. I presume I could not have a more important hope for you and me than that we may be filled with this charity, this pure love of Christ, to serve our fellowman. I express this hope to you in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

These two delightful and impressive men have spoken to us out of their hearts as they leave their service as General Authorities. That doesn’t mean they’re through. Brother Tenorio’s native tongue is Spanish—Mexican. Brother Rector’s native tongue is Missourian.

Elder Claudio R. M. Costa, who was called as a Seventy at the April conference, will be our next speaker.

Elder Claudio R. M. Costa

Learning the true meaning of success

Dear brothers and sisters, I am grateful to my Heavenly Father for having sent me to this earth to loving parents who, from my boyhood, taught me

the priceless principles of righteousness, honesty, faithfulness, and how to work.

I was born into a poor family, and early in my life I had to work. This has been a great blessing to me. When I was twelve years old, I had to go to evening

school because I worked ten hours during the day. Many times on the way to school I would sleep on the bus or train. Sometimes I would even fall asleep during class. However, upon arriving home late at night, I would always find my loving parents waiting for me.

At that time all I wanted in life was to become a successful man, which to me meant having many material possessions, comfort, and a life of ease. With this as a goal, I went on working and studying.

After I was baptized into the Church, I came to understand the true meaning of success. Being successful means to be a servant of God, serving our fellowmen, being truly committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and keeping the commandments of God.

Sacrifices to go to the São Paulo Temple

During the time I presided over the Brazil Manaus Mission, I witnessed great examples of true success, stories which came from people truly devoted to the gospel and to their covenants with God.

One man I met lived simply in a tiny, little town in the middle of the Amazon. After being baptized with his family, he could hardly wait to complete a year's membership in the Church so he could take his wife and children to the temple. The São Paulo Brazil Temple is very far from the Amazon. It usually takes four days by boat and four days by bus to get to the temple—about a week's travel. This man was a cabinetmaker. How could he save enough money to pay for himself, his wife, and his children? Although he worked hard for many months, he made very little money.

When the time came to go to the temple, he sold all his furniture and appliances, even his electric saw and his only means of transportation, a motorcycle—everything he had—and went to the temple with his wife and children.

It required eight days of travel to reach São Paulo. After spending four glorious days in the temple doing the work of the Lord, this family then had to travel seven more days to return to their home. But they went back home happy, feeling that their difficulties and struggles were nothing compared to the great happiness and blessings they had experienced in the house of the Lord.

During my mission I met missionaries—young men and women—who for me were examples of true success. They were so faithful and excited about the gospel that they were never bothered by the scorching high temperatures and excessive humidity of the Amazon climate. They were truly angelic messengers carrying the gospel message to the people of northern Brazil.

A truly successful man

I remember a faithful and devoted member of the Church who was always in a good mood and always smiling. But one day I saw him crying. He told me the reason he was sad was because, at the age of seventy, he saw himself as a failure for having never been able to give his family the material comforts he felt they deserved.

I asked him, "How many children do you have?" He answered, "Four." I continued, "How many are members of the Church?" He said, "Four." I asked further, "How many are faithful members of the Church?" His answer: "Four." "How many are sealed to you?" "Four." "How many have married in the temple?" Again his answer was "Four." Then, moved by the Spirit, I told him that the success he had achieved in his life was one of the greatest success stories I had ever heard.

Scriptural teachings about success

I have learned much from the scriptures about success. It is wonderful to

read about the journey of Lehi and his family to the promised land. Of Lehi's older sons, Nephi and Sam, through their faithfulness to the Lord, charted their course for true success. For them, being successful meant being faithful in following the Lord's commandments. Through their example the lives of millions of people have been blessed to this date. And because of their obedience, many people have followed the path of truth and righteousness, striving to be worthy of the Spirit of the Lord in their lives.

I often think about the rich young man who approached the Master to ask Him what he should do to gain eternal life. Upon receiving the answer that eternal life meant giving up his riches and following the Lord, he turned his back and went away sorrowful because he was unwilling to forsake his many possessions.

I am grateful to the Lord for having touched my heart and for helping me to choose the better part—that which, so long as I strive for worthiness, cannot be taken from me. Being faithful to God as worthy members of His church, learning about Him and how to truly follow and worship Him, is more priceless than gold, silver, or diamonds.

Gratitude for General Authorities

The General Authorities of the Church, for whom I am most grateful, are true heroes for me. I had been a member of the Church for just one week when I met my first General Authority, Elder Royden G. Derrick, a member of the Seventy. I shall never forget the challenge he presented to the members of the Church to be exemplary in all aspects of our lives.

I shall always remember the counsel given by our beloved President Spencer W. Kimball about not only spiritual matters but also how to manage our temporal lives. I have followed his counsel, and I am happy and grateful for the protection that comes from hearkening to the words of the prophets, apostles, my Brethren of the Quorum, and my local leaders. Only when we keep the commandments of the Lord and do His will can we feel totally safe.

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I know that we are guided by a prophet today. I testify to you that President Howard W. Hunter is a prophet of God. My testimony is renewed every time I hear and follow his counsel. My life has been very blessed through the gospel. For this I am most grateful, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Claudio Mendes Costa. His native tongue is Portuguese. We have heard powerful testimonies as we have seen the reach and spread of this work out across the world and the raising up of strong and faithful and tremendous advocates.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," following which Elders W. Don Ladd and James O. Mason will speak to us. Both of them were sustained as Seventies at the April conference.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder W. Don Ladd

A rising tide of evil

"There are . . . so many kinds of voices in the world," said the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians two thousand years ago (1 Corinthians 14:10). They seemed to be troubled by the same conflicting messages we hear today, and it can be frightening when you consider how fragile and fickle the fabric of our society really is.

There have always been strident sounds and discordant voices, and our day is no exception. Every day in the newspapers, over television, in movies and magazines we are bombarded with violence and immorality clothed in the enticing voices of permissiveness.

In His sermon on the mount, the Master admonished, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:34).

Sufficient indeed is the evil thereof unto this day in which we live. There seems to be a rising tide of evil, a flood of iniquity spreading throughout the world. Crime and violence are increasing at an alarming rate. Fear openly stalks our streets and invades our homes.

It has been said that you can tell the ideals of a nation by its advertisements, and many of the ones I see do not speak well of us. Someone said there was a time when movies were rated on how good they were, not on who was allowed to see them.

According to the Book of Mormon, the devil "seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27). The evidence of his handiwork is certainly around us. Elder Richard L. Evans once said, "If we don't change direction, we will arrive at where we are going" (*Richard Evans' Quote Book* [Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1971], p. 244).

Strengthen ourselves and our families

It is not in idleness that our prophets admonish again and again to strengthen ourselves and our families—to hold family home evenings, to read and study the scriptures, to have daily personal and family prayers, and, to quote our prophet, Howard W. Hunter, to "treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness" (quoted in *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 4).

The immoral influences of the world are especially destructive to children. But our children, like ourselves, aren't going to live in a vacuum. They never have and they never will. In all their growing and developing, we can do much to help them, to protect them, and to guide them. But we cannot isolate them from the influences of their own time and generation. There will be times when other voices are in their ears, when other hands are on their shoulders, and when they are away from home.

We would do well, then, while ours is still the strongest influence in their lives, to give them a sure set of standards and a firm foundation of safe and sound principles.

Build a personal ark

The Lord said to Noah, "Make thee an ark" and "with thee will I establish my covenant" (Genesis 6:14, 18).

"And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him. . . .

" . . . And Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark" (Genesis 7:5, 23).

We all need to build a personal ark, to fortify ourselves against this rising tide of evil, to protect ourselves and our families against the floodwaters of iniquity around us. And we shouldn't wait until it starts raining, but prepare

in advance. This has been the message of all the prophets in this dispensation, including President Hunter, as well as the prophets of old.

Unfortunately we don't always heed the clear warnings of our prophets. We coast complacently along until calamity strikes, and then we panic.

When it starts raining, it is too late to begin building the ark. However, we do need to listen to the Lord's spokesmen. We need to calmly continue to move ahead and prepare for what will surely come. We need not panic or fear, for if we are prepared, spiritually and temporally, we and our families will survive any flood. Our arks will float on a sea of faith if our works have been steadily and surely preparing for the future.

The key is to accept the invitation of our prophet, whom we sustained this morning, "to live with ever more attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the love and hope and compassion He displayed" (quoted in *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 4).

Build a relationship with Christ

The most important thing we can do—young or old—is develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. If we do,

we will always be comfortable with ourselves. Any questions of self-esteem and self-worth will diminish, and we will have a quiet confidence that will see us through any trial. And the Savior's promise to us is "Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world" (D&C 50:41).

Whatever the anxiety or fear or frustration, we have only to remember the Lord's comforting words to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Liberty Jail: "My son, peace be unto thy soul" (D&C 121:7). To each of us, He will always be there to say, "My son, my daughter, my child, peace be unto thy soul."

And in return we should pledge, as did the poet George Herbert:

Sev'n whole dayes, not one in seven,
I will praise thee. . . .
Ev'n eternitie is too short
To extoll thee.
["Praise (II)," lines 17–18, 27–28]

My brothers and sisters, I bear you my witness that Jesus is the Christ, that He indeed overcame the world through His atonement, and that He will always be there to comfort us if we will follow His example and do the will of the Father. And I do so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder James O. Mason

The dawning of a brighter day in Africa

We heard the music and stirring words of "Onward, Christian Soldiers" as we entered the house used as the chapel of the Lagos Nigeria Fourth Branch. The singers—eighteen elders, two sisters, and one missionary couple—were preparing for their zone conference. We were impressed by their bright, eager smiles and faces glowing with enthusiasm. The single missionaries had been called to serve from homes in Ghana,

Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. The couple from Canada were on their second mission.

We sang with conviction the opening hymn of the conference:

Go forth with faith to tell the world
Of Jesus Christ, the Lord.
Bear witness he is God's own Son;
Proclaim his wondrous word.
Go forth with hope and courage
strong
To spread the word abroad

That people of all nations
Are children of our God. . . .

Go forth with pow'r to tell the world
The gospel is restored,
That all may gain eternal life
Thru Jesus Christ, the Lord.
["Go Forth with Faith," *Hymns*, no. 263]

A few days earlier I had presided at a stake conference in Benin City, Nigeria. The stake had been created a year earlier and had grown by over 260 members, mostly families, during that period. The percentage of member families receiving home teaching visits in this large, sprawling city is well within the range of established stakes in developed countries, even though few families in Benin City own cars or telephones. Attendance at sacrament meeting in the new stake is high in spite of ongoing political turmoil and frequent public transportation disruptions. Nearly 50 percent of stake members were present at the Sunday morning session of stake conference; many families walked considerable distances to attend. A well-trained choir sang with joy the hymns of Zion. Comparable levels of participation and dedicated, competent leadership are evident wherever the Church is established in sub-Saharan Africa. Africa is truly seeing the dawning of a brighter day.

Steady growth of the Church in Africa

The first stake on the continent was created in South Africa in 1970. There are now five stakes in that country. The Johannesburg South Africa Temple was dedicated in 1985. Five additional stakes have more recently been organized in Nigeria and Ghana, the first a mere decade after the 1978 revelation on the priesthood. Over fifty districts of the Church are growing in Africa under inspired local leadership. The Church is authorized to do missionary work in

twenty-six of the forty-four countries included in the Africa Area.

Growth of the Church in Africa moves forward deliberately and steadily according to inspired design. Altogether there are 80,000 members, 12 missions, 10 stakes, and 425 wards and branches. The number of baptisms during 1993 totaled over 9,000. Even greater numbers of baptisms would be possible if that were the sole measure of success. However, we are anxious that each of our African brothers and sisters be remembered and "nourished by the good word of God" (Moroni 6:4). The Church therefore proceeds in an orderly and planned fashion. Efforts are focused to create centers of strength. The goal is to establish deep pools of leadership that will become the foundation for future Church expansion.

Missionary work is concentrated geographically around existing chapels. Buildings are sited for occupancy by two or more Church units. The missionaries concentrate their efforts on converting families and potential leaders. Major attention is given to training local leadership, which is made easy because members in Africa are eager to be taught and are quick to learn and abide by gospel principles.

Missionary couples needed in Africa

Nearly half of the 960 full-time missionaries serving in Africa are Africans, and the number is growing. Retired couples from the United States and Canada play a significant role. Unselfishly leaving behind home, children, and grandchildren, these devoted couples are ministering angels to grateful, loving people. Finding, testifying, baptizing, and above all else loving are duties eagerly assumed by the missionary couples who truly comprehend what retirement can be. These couples also provide deeply appreciated gifts of literacy, better health,

and humanitarian service to members and nonmembers.

Rich and eternal are the rewards as these couples nourish and carry "in their arms, and . . . upon their shoulders" the truth-seeking people they are called to bless (see 1 Nephi 21:22). Sacrifice may be required—discipleship is not always easy—but life is never the same for a couple who have tasted the sweetness and joy of missionary service. Otherwise, why do so many return for second and even third missions? More couples are urgently needed in Africa and elsewhere. My brothers and sisters who are retired or approaching retirement, please prayerfully consider the rich blessings that flow from missionary service. If you should "bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy . . . in the kingdom of my Father" (D&C 18:15).

The truth of God goes forth

When the Church was still in its infancy, the Prophet Joseph Smith stated: "Our missionaries are going forth to different nations; . . . the Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; . . . but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every

clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done" (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

Yes, in spite of challenges, the work of the Lord moves forward steadily in Africa. I am humbly grateful for my calling as a Seventy, and I rejoice in this opportunity to serve. I love the people of Africa. I am thankful for the sweet companionship of my wife and for the faithful prayers of my children and their families.

Brothers and sisters, I know that my Redeemer lives and is the Savior of the world, that this is the only true and living church upon the earth, and that President Howard W. Hunter is a prophet of God. And to this I bear solemn witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have heard from Elders W. Don Ladd, who grew up in the Deep South, and James O. Mason, who grew up in Salt Lake City and has had a distinguished medical career, including service as surgeon general of the United States.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, who was called as a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles in June, will now speak to us.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

A special witness of Jesus Christ

My beloved brothers and sisters, this is my first opportunity to stand before you since the events of June 23 altered the course of my life and of my service forever. That was exactly one hundred days ago, and every one of those days I have prayed to be worthy of and equal to this sacred responsibility. Perhaps you can understand the immense personal inadequacy I feel and the deep,

often painful examination of my soul I have experienced.

Obviously my greatest thrill and the most joyful of all realizations is that I have the opportunity, as Nephi phrased it, to "talk of Christ, . . . rejoice in Christ, . . . preach of Christ, [and] prophesy of Christ" (2 Nephi 25:26) wherever I may be and with whomever I may find myself until the last breath of my life is gone. Surely there could be no higher purpose or greater privilege than that of "special

[witness] of the name of Christ in all the world" (D&C 107:23).

But my greatest anxiety stems from that very same commission. A line of scripture reminds us with searing understatement that "they which preach the gospel should live . . . the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14). Beyond my words and teachings and spoken witness, my life must be part of that testimony of Jesus. My very being should reflect the divinity of this work. I could not bear it if anything I might ever say or do would in any way diminish your faith in Christ, your love for this church, or the esteem in which you hold the holy apostleship.

I do promise you—as I have promised the Lord and these my brethren—that I will strive to live worthy of this trust and serve to the full measure of my ability.

I know I cannot succeed without the guidance of the Master, whose work this is. On occasion the beauty of his life and the magnitude of his gift come to my heart with such force that, as a favorite hymn says, "I scarce can take it in" ("How Great Thou Art," *Hymns*, no. 86). The purity of his life, his mercy and compassion for us have led me again and again to "bow in humble adoration and there proclaim, 'My God, how great thou art!'"

Gratitude to family

I wish to thank my beloved wife, Pat, and our heaven-sent children for their prayers and their love, not only through these recent weeks, but always. My wife has the purest faith and deepest spirituality I know. Never in her entire life has she sought her own reward or pursued a selfish motive. Paraphrasing what Mark Twain's Adam said of his Eve, I say of her: Wherever she was, there was paradise (see "Eve's Diary," in *The Works of Mark Twain*, 37 vols. [New York: Gabriel Wells, 1922–25], 24:383).

And to each of our children, I say, Thank you for being the kind of person I

prayed at your birth you would become. It is high privilege indeed when a father's best friends and noblest examples are his own children. To my wife, my children, my saintly parents, and scores of others along the path of life who teach and serve and sacrifice to make us what we are, I express my undying appreciation.

Prophetic calling of President Hunter

If I may, I wish to bear personal witness to two kinds of miracles that I have seen in the process of coming to this new office.

One divine manifestation I have seen is of the prophetic calling of President Howard W. Hunter, whom we had the privilege of sustaining this morning in solemn assembly. Because of the unexpected call which came to me in the first weeks of his prophetic ministry, I have had something of a unique vantage point from which to observe the miracle of his renewal, the profound evidence of God's hand upon this chosen leader.

In a rapid sequence of events that Thursday morning, President Hunter interviewed me at length, extended to me my call, formally introduced me to the First Presidency and the Twelve gathered in their temple meeting, gave me my apostolic charge and outline of duties, ordained me an Apostle, set me apart as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, added a magnificent and beautiful personal blessing of considerable length, then went on to conduct the sacred business of that first of my temple meetings, lasting another two or three hours!

President Hunter did all of that personally. And through it all he was strong and fixed and powerful. Indeed, it seemed to me he got stronger and more powerful as the day progressed. I count it one of the greatest privileges of my life just to have observed the Lord's anointed engaged in such a manner.

I include in that tribute President Gordon B. Hinckley and President Thomas S. Monson, who that day and always stand so faithfully at President Hunter's side in the First Presidency, and President Boyd K. Packer, who leads the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Yes, I testify that God has worked his will on Howard William Hunter. He has touched his lips and spread the prophetic mantle of ordained leadership upon his shoulders. President Hunter is a miracle—one who has been fashioned, molded, refined, and sustained for the service he now renders. He is a most remarkable blend of velvet and steel. Like every prophet before him—including Joseph Smith Jr.—and every prophet who will succeed him, President Hunter was called and foreordained in the grand councils of heaven before this world was. I bear solemn witness of that fact and the principle of Church governance it teaches. And age? Age has nothing to do with it. Whether an incomparable fourteen-year-old in 1820 or an invincible eighty-six-year-old in 1994, it is obvious that the number of birthdays doesn't count, that "time . . . is measured [only] unto men" (Alma 40:8). President Hunter, we all bask in the glow of those candles on your cake and look forward to lighting yet another one in six weeks' time.

Strength from Church members

I have also seen another miracle. That miracle is you, the great faithful but often unheralded body of the Church, who play your part in the ongoing saga of the Restoration. In a real sense, the wonder and beauty of this historic day would not, could not be complete without you.

Certainly I, for one, have taken great strength from you today—you who come from a hundred different nations and ten hundred walks of life; you who have

turned away from the glitter and glare and "vain imaginations" (1 Nephi 12:18) of the world to seek a holier life in the splendor of the city of God; you who love your families and your neighbors and, yes, those who hate you and curse you and "despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44); you who pay tithing with certainty even when you are uncertain about every other aspect of your financial future; you who send your sons and daughters on missions, clothing that child in better apparel than you now wear—or will wear—for the eighteen or twenty-four months of sacrifice that lie ahead; you who plead for blessings to be bestowed on others, especially those in physical or spiritual distress, offering to give them your own health or happiness if that would be something God could allow; you who face life alone, or face it without advantage, or face it with little success; you who carry on in quiet courage, doing the best you can. I pay tribute to every one of you and am deeply honored to stand in your presence.

I especially thank you for sustaining your leaders, whatever their personal sense of limitation may be. This morning, in common consent, you volunteered to uphold—or more literally "hold up"—the presiding officers of the kingdom, those who bear the keys and responsibility for the work, not one man of whom sought the position or feels equal to the task. And even when Jeffrey Holland's name is proposed as the last and the least of the newly ordained, your arm goes lovingly to the square. And you say to Brother Holland through his tears and his nights of walking the floor: "You lean on us. Lean on us out here in Omaha and Ontario and Osaka, where we have never even seen you and scarcely know who you are. But you are one of the 'Brethren,' so you are no stranger or foreigner to us, but a fellow citizen in the household of God. You will be prayed

for in our family, and you will hold a place within our hearts. Our strength shall be your strength. Our faith will build your faith. Your work will be our work."

This church, the great institutional body of Christ, is a marvelous work and a wonder not only because of what it does for the faithful but also because of what the faithful do for it. Your lives are at the very heart of that marvel. You are evidence of the wonder of it all.

Debbie, Tanya, and Liza Avila

Just twenty-four hours after my call as an Apostle last June, I left for a Church assignment in southern California, where in due course I found myself standing by the bedsides of Debbie, Tanya, and Liza Avila. These three lovely sisters, ages thirty-three, thirty-two, and twenty-three, respectively, each developed muscular dystrophy at age seven. Since that tender age, each has had her rendezvous with pneumonia and tracheotomies, with neuropathy and leg braces. Then came wheelchairs, respirators, and, finally, total immobility.

Enduring the longest period of immobility of the three sisters, Tanya has been on her back for seventeen years, having never moved from her bed during that period of time. Never once in seventeen years has she seen the sun rise or set or felt the rain upon her face. Never once in seventeen years has she picked a flower or chased a rainbow or watched a bird in flight. For a lesser number of years, Debbie and Liza have also now lived with those same physical restrictions. Yet somehow through it all, these sisters have not only endured, they have triumphed—earning Young Women personal achievement awards, graduating from high school (including seminary), completing university correspondence courses, and reading the standard works over and over and over again.

Avila sisters go to the temple

But there has been one other abiding ambition these remarkable women were determined to see fulfilled. They rightly saw themselves as daughters of the covenant, offspring of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Rachel. They vowed that somehow, some way, someday they would go to the house of the Lord to claim those eternal promises. And now even that has been accomplished. "It was the most thrilling and fulfilling day of my life," Debbie said. "I truly felt I was home. Everyone was so gracious and helpful with the innumerable and seemingly insurmountable arrangements that had to be made. Never in my life have I felt more loved and accepted."

Of her experience, Tanya said, "The temple is the only place I have ever been where I felt truly whole. I have always felt I was a daughter of God, but only in the temple did I understand what that truly meant. The fact that I went through the experience lying horizontally with a respirator took absolutely nothing away from this sacred experience."

Elder Douglas Callister, who, along with the presidency and workers in the Los Angeles Temple, assisted these sisters in making their dream come true, said to me, "There they were, dressed in white, long black hair falling down nearly to the floor from their horizontal position, eyes filled with tears, unable to move their hands or any other part of the body except their heads, savoring, absorbing, cherishing every word, every moment, every aspect of the temple endowment." Debbie would later say of the experience, "I now know what it will be like to be resurrected, surrounded by heavenly angels, and in the presence of God."

One year after her own endowment, Debbie Avila made her way back to the temple, again with staggering special

arrangements and assistance, to do the work for her beloved grandmother who had literally given her life in the care of these three granddaughters. For twenty-two consecutive years, without reprieve or respite or exception, Sister Esperanza Lamelas cared for these three day and night. Virtually every night for twenty-two years she awakened each hour on the hour to physically turn each child so that she would be comfortable in her sleep and avoid the problem of bedsores. In 1989, at age seventy-four, her own health now broken, she died, having given new meaning to the Prophet Joseph's invitation to "waste and wear out our lives . . . do[ing] all things that lie in our power [for the benefit of] the rising generation, and . . . all the pure in heart" (D&C 123:13, 17, 11).

Doing the best things in the worst times

The ongoing miracle of the Restoration. Covenants. Temples. Quiet, unsung Christian living. The work of the kingdom done with worn hands, weary hands, hands which in some cases cannot be raised to the square, but which are surely sustaining hands in every holy and sacred sense of the word.

Let me close. The mid-1600s were a terrible time in England. The Puritan revolutionaries had executed a king, and political life—including Parliament—was in total chaos. A typhus epidemic turned the whole island into a hospital. The great plague, followed by the great fire, would turn it into a morgue.

In Leicestershire, near where Sister Holland and I lived and labored for three magnificent years, there is a very small church with a plaque on the wall which reads, "In the year of 1653, when all things sacred were . . . either demolished or profaned, Sir Robert Shirley [built] this church; whose singular praise it is, To have done the best things in the worst times, and hoped them in the most calamitous."

To have done the best things in the worst times, and to have hoped them in the most calamitous. Those are lines I would use to praise the prophets *and* the faithful members of the Church of Jesus Christ down through the years—legions of the quietly heroic in every decade of the dispensation, led by the Lord's anointed, whose arms can also grow weary and whose legs are sometimes weak.

In the spirit of that legacy from those who have given so much—prophets and apostles and people like you—I pledge to "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men" (2 Nephi 31:20). I pledge to "take hold of that for which Christ once took hold of me" (Philippians 3:12, New English Bible).

I testify of him, the Redeemer of the world and Master of us all. He is the Only Begotten Son of the living God, who has exalted that son's name over every other, and has given him principality, power, might, and dominion at his right hand in the heavenly place. We esteem this Messiah to be holy, harmless, undefiled—the bearer of unchangeable priesthood (see Hebrews 7:24, 26). He is the anchor to our souls and our high priest of promise. He is our God of good things to come. In time and in eternity—and surely in striving to fulfill this new responsibility that has come to me—I shall forever be grateful for his promise: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). I thank him for that blessing upon us all, in his name, the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

As I raised my arm this morning, I raise my voice this afternoon gladly to sustain President Hunter. He is a meek and special man. And, as we've heard the testimonies from two new Apostles whom we sustained this morning, I raise my sustaining voice this afternoon. I rejoice in two outstanding new Seventies and in new special sister leaders.

Increasing despair and hopelessness

For some years, brothers and sisters, there has been an increasing and profound sense of existential despair in the world. This mortal hopelessness both reflects and affects much of mankind. Whether tribal or national, wars constitute "the continued experience of twentieth-century man" (Alfred Kazin, *Bright Book of Life* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1973], p. 81). A grumpy cynicism pervades politics in so many places on this planet. Holocausts, famine, pestilence, and tides of refugees have taken a terrible toll on human hope, with much of that toll coming from man-made, avoidable disasters. Causality can be assigned to one or another form of iniquity. No wonder, as the scriptures say, despair comes of iniquity! (see Moroni 10:22).

Of course, many disagree over what constitutes sin, but surely they do not welcome the deepening of human despair! Some moderns do not lament the loss of traditional faith either, but surely they lament the further loss of hope and charity, ever in such short supply anyway.

Consequences of lack of hope

Does hope really matter, or is it merely an antique virtue?

Without hope, what is the future of lubricating forgiveness among the human family? Without hope, why forgo now in order to preserve precious resources for

future generations? Without hope, what will keep the remaining idealism from also souring into cynicism and thereby laying waste to governments and families—institutions already in such serious jeopardy?

A coalition of consequences is emerging. As prophesied, the love of many waxes cold (see Matthew 24:12). Even those affectionally secure themselves can sense the chill in the air. The loss of hope sends selfishness surging as many turn even more intensively to pleasing themselves. The diminished sense of sin diminishes shame, that hot, sharp spur needed for repentance. Shame is often replaced by the arrogance of those morally adrift, including strutting celebrities whose outer boldness camouflages their inner emptiness. Henry David Thoreau correctly observed that "unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusement of mankind" (*Walden* [New York: Harper and Row, 1965], p. 7). No wonder so much hollow laughter emanates from the "lonely crowd."

As societies trivialize traditional values, we witness a flow of immense suffering. We anguish, for instance, over what happens to the unborn, who cannot vote, and to children at risk. We weep over children having children and children shooting children. Often secular remedies to these challenges are not based on spiritual principles. To borrow a metaphor—secular remedies resemble an alarmed passenger traveling on the wrong train who tries to compensate by running up the aisle in the opposite direction!

Ultimate hope is in Christ

Only the acceptance of the revelations of God can bring both direction and correction and, in turn, bring a "brightness of hope" (2 Nephi 31:20). Real

hope does not automatically “spring eternal” unless it is connected with eternal things!

“What is it that ye shall hope for?” Moroni wrote. “Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ” (Moroni 7:41; see also Alma 27:28). From this triumphal act, resulting in the eventual resurrection of all mankind, so many lesser hopes derive their significance!

Prophets have always had and taught ultimate hope in Christ. Jacob wrote, “We knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and . . . also all the holy prophets which were before us” (Jacob 4:4).

You and I can be repeatedly reassured concerning this grand hope by the Comforter, who teaches us the truth about “things as they really are, and . . . really will be” (Jacob 4:13; see also Moroni 8:26). Such hope constitutes the “anchor of the soul” (Hebrews 6:19). Such hope is retained through faith in Christ (see Alma 25:16; Ether 12:9). In contrast, a resurrectionless view of life produces only proximate hope (see 1 Corinthians 15:19).

Having ultimate hope does not mean we will always be rescued from proximate problems, but we will be rescued from everlasting death! Meanwhile, ultimate hope makes it possible to say the same three words used centuries ago by three valiant men. They knew God could rescue them from the fiery furnace if He chose. “But if not,” they said, nevertheless, they would still serve Him! (Daniel 3:18).

Relation of faith, hope, and charity

Unsurprisingly the triad of faith, hope, and charity, which brings us to Christ, has strong and converging linkage: faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ, hope is in His atonement, and charity is the “pure love of Christ” (see Ether

12:28; Moroni 7:47). Each of these attributes qualifies us for the celestial kingdom (see Moroni 10:20–21; Ether 12:34). Each, first of all, requires us to be meek and lowly (see Moroni 7:39, 43).

Faith and hope are constantly interactive and may not always be precisely distinguished or sequenced. Though not perfect knowledge either, hope’s enlivened expectations are “with surety” true (Ether 12:4; see also Romans 8:24; Hebrews 11:1; Alma 32:21). In the geometry of restored theology, hope has a greater circumference than faith. If faith increases, the perimeter of hope stretches correspondingly.

Just as doubt, despair, and desensitization go together, so do faith, hope, and charity. The latter, however, must be carefully and constantly nurtured, whereas despair, like dandelions, needs so little encouragement to sprout and spread. Despair comes so naturally to the natural man!

Hope strengthens and illuminates us

Souls can be roused and rallied by hope’s “reveille” as by no other music. Even if comrades slumber or desert, “lively hope” performs like a reconnoitering scout out in advance of God’s columns; “there is hope smiling brightly before us” (1 Peter 1:3; “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19). Hope caused disciples to go quickly and expectantly to an empty garden tomb (see Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:8–12). Hope helped a prophet to see rescuing rain in a distant cloud which appeared to be no larger than a man’s hand (see 1 Kings 18:41–46).

Significantly, those who look forward to a next and better world are usually “anxiously engaged” in improving this one, for they “always abound in good works” (D&C 58:27; Alma 7:24). Thus, real hope is more than wishful musing. It stiffens, not slackens, the

spiritual spine. It is composed, not giddy, eager without being naive, and pleasantly steady without being smug. Hope is realistic anticipation taking the form of determination—a determination not merely to survive but to “endure . . . well” to the end (D&C 121:8).

While weak hope leaves us at the mercy of our moods and events, “brightness of hope” produces illuminated individuals. Their luminosity is seen, and things are also seen by it! Such hope permits us to “press forward” even when dark clouds oppress (2 Nephi 31:20; see also v. 16; Hebrews 6:19; Ether 12:4; Colossians 1:21–23). Sometimes in the deepest darkness there is no external light—only an inner light to guide and to reassure.

Though anchored in grand and ultimate hope, some of our tactical hopes are another matter. We may hope for a pay raise, a special date, an electoral victory, or a bigger house—things which may or may not be realized. Faith in Father’s plan gives us endurance even amid the wreckage of such proximate hopes. Hope keeps us “anxiously engaged” in good causes even when these appear to be losing causes (D&C 58:27).

Hope helps us walk by faith

Hope helps us to walk by faith, not by sight (see 2 Corinthians 5:7). This can actually be safer. When unaided spiritually, natural sight often shrinks from the odds. It is immobilized by improbabilities. Mauled by his moods and intimidated by his fears, the natural man overreacts to, while hope overrides, the disappointments of the day.

Hope is particularly needed in the hand-to-hand combat required to put off the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19). Giving up on God and on oneself constitutes simultaneous surrender to the natural man.

Daily hope is vital, since the “Winter Quarters” of our lives are not immedi-

ately adjacent to our promised land either. An arduous trek still awaits, but hope spurs weary disciples on.

Those with true hope often see their personal circumstances shaken, like kaleidoscopes, again and again. Yet with the “eye of faith,” they still see divine pattern and purpose (Alma 5:15).

By pressing forward we can stand on what was yesterday’s horizon, thereby drawing hope from our own experiences. Hence Paul described how “tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Romans 5:3–4). Therefore we sing, “We’ve proved him in days that are past” (*Hymns*, no. 19).

Hope feasts on the words of Christ, “written for our learning,” so that “having all these witnesses” through the “comfort of the scriptures [we] might have hope” (Romans 15:4; Jacob 4:6; see also 2 Nephi 31:20). We sing, too, of how “more holiness” involves having “more hope in his word” (“More Holiness Give Me,” *Hymns*, no. 131).

Hope helps us bless others

Genuine hope is urgently needed in order to be more loving even as the love of many waxes cold; more merciful, even when misunderstood or misrepresented; more holy, even as the world ripens in iniquity; more courteous and patient in a coarsening and curt world; and more full of heartfelt hope, even when other men’s hearts fail them. Whatever our particular furrow, we are to “plow in hope,” without looking back or letting yesterday hold tomorrow hostage (1 Corinthians 9:10).

Hope can be contagious, so we are to be “ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh . . . a reason of the hope that is in [us]” (1 Peter 3:15). If, said Brother Brigham, we do not impart knowledge to others and do good, then we “will become contracted in [our] views and feelings” (in *Journal of Dis-*

courses, 2:267). Despair is contraction at the end of its journey.

Genuine hope gives spiritual spunk, including to deserving parents drenched in honest sweat from being “anxiously engaged.” Just as the leaning Tower of Pisa is a persistent rebuke to architectural pessimism, so parental hope—by refusing to topple merely because of the gravity of the current family situation—is a repudiation of despair. Giving parents never give up hope!

Though otherwise “lively,” hope stands quietly with us at funerals. Our tears are just as wet, but not because of despair. Rather, they are tears of appreciation evoked by poignant separation. They will change, ere long, to tears of glorious anticipation. Yet the emptiness is so real and so restless that it initiates a retroactive inventory of what is now so painfully missing, doing so, however, while forecasting fullness and resplendent reunion!

Humble hope helps us to improve by being sufficiently free of ego to ask, “Lord, is it I?” (Matthew 26:22). Submissive hope also readies us to “give away all [our] sins” because we have come to know Jesus, who alone can take them! (Alma 22:18).

Gospel hope keeps us from being muted by being either a naive Pollyanna or a despairing Cassandra. Voices of warning are meant to be heard, not just raised.

Being blessed with hope, let us, as disciples, reach out to all who, for whatever reason, have “moved away from the hope of the gospel” (Colossians 1:23). Let us reach to lift hands which hang hopelessly down.

Hope beckons us to the Savior

Hope beckons all of us to come home where a glow reflects the Light of the World, whose “brightness and glory defy all description” (Joseph Smith—History

1:17). Jesus waits “with open arms to receive” those who finally overcome by faith and hope (Mormon 6:17). His welcome will consist not of a brief, loving pat but instead of being “clasped in the arms of Jesus”! (Mormon 5:11).

These Primary children will soon sing about wishing “that [Jesus’] arms had been thrown around [them]” (“I Think When I Read That Sweet Story,” *Children’s Songbook*, p. 56). They and we can “hope, and even know” of such sacred things! (Alma 28:12).

Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. daylight saving time. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session, which will immediately follow, must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to the Primary children’s choir from the Kaysville Utah Region for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon. They will now sing in closing “Jesus Once Was a Little Child” and “I Think When I Read That Sweet Story of Old.” Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Jesus Once Was a Little Child” and “I Think When I Read That Sweet Story.”

Elder Gary J. Coleman offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 164th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 1, 1994. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus. Donald Ripplinger and Robert Bowden directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

Good evening, brethren. President Howard W. Hunter, who presides at this conference, has asked me, Brother Monson, to conduct this session. We welcome you brethren this evening to this general priesthood session.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world. We acknowledge the approximately 2,500 elders viewing these proceedings at the Provo Missionary Training Center.

We note that Elders James E. Faust, Jack H. Goaslind, and LeGrand R. Curtis are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; Elders Joe J. Christensen and Sam K. Shimabukuro are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building; and Elders Carlos H. Amado and Robert K. Dellenbach are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those in outlying areas, we announce that at this morning's solemn assembly Elders Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Andrew Wayne Peterson, and Cecil O. Samuel-

son were sustained as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Hartman Rector Jr. was given emeritus status.

Elders Albert Choules Jr., Lloyd P. George, Gerald E. Melchin, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, and Horacio A. Tenorio were released from their service as Seventies.

Elders Charles Didier, J. Ballard Washburn, and F. Burton Howard were sustained to succeed Elders Merlin R. Lybbert, Clinton L. Cutler, and Ronald E. Poelman as the general Sunday School presidency.

Sister Michaelene P. Grassli, Betty Jo N. Jepsen, and Ruth B. Wright were released as the general Primary presidency.

Sister Patricia P. Pinegar was released as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

Sisters Patricia Peterson Pinegar, Anne Goalen Wirthlin, and Susan Lillywhite Warner were called as the new general presidency of the Primary.

Sister Bonnie Dansie Parkin was called as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brothers Donald Ripplinger and Robert Bowden, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ. Brother Hunter smiled when I told him the opening song. We shall begin with the choir singing "Awake, My Sons, Awake," following which Elder Angel Abrea of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Awake, My Sons, Awake."

Elder Angel Abrea offered the invocation.

President Monson

In the sweet spirit of this morning's solemn assembly and the session this afternoon, the choir will now favor us with "Secret Prayer." Following the

choir number, Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

The choir sang "Secret Prayer."

Elder Richard G. Scott

Making the right choices

Present tonight are many young men who hold the priesthood of God.¹ Some of you look forward to being a missionary when you are older. Others are planning to go soon. Still others have completed missions and are seeking an eternal companion. I am sobered by the realization that some of you will not reach these worthy goals because of other choices you are making now.

I am grateful this is a private priesthood meeting, for I have felt impressed to treat sensitive yet important matters. While they apply to all present, I particularly want to talk with you young men. I will speak as though you and I were alone in a private interview and no one else can hear us. My purpose is to help you learn how to make the right choices. That will help you develop strong feelings of self-worth. You will have confidence to do right and overcome strong negative peer pressure and bad influences.

As a young boy I felt that some things that I heard discussed by others at school about private parts of the body were wrong. Yet I wasn't really sure how wrong or why they were wrong. You may have similar feelings. Since in tonight's setting you cannot ask me anything, I will use some of the confidential questions most frequently asked by youth I have met across the world. I will answer them by what I have learned from the scriptures and the prophets. You then will have clear standards from which to

make choices. I pray that as we talk, the Holy Ghost will let you feel the truth of what is said. I know that as you listen and think of how our interview applies to you, there will come impressions regarding what to do about it in your own life.

How can we resist peer pressure?

Question: Could you give us some help about resisting peer pressure? Why do some people do things that are wrong, then brag about how much fun they are having? When I don't participate, they make me feel stupid because I won't do it.

Answer: You can't please God without upsetting Satan, so you will get pressure from those he tempts to do wrong. Individuals who do wrong want you to join them because they feel more comfortable in what they are doing when others do it also. They may also want to take advantage of you.

It is natural to want to be accepted by peers, to be part of a group. Some even join gangs because of that desire to belong, but they lose their freedom, and some lose their lives.

One of the hardest things for you to recognize is how truly strong you already are and how others silently respect you. We have great confidence in you. You don't need to compromise your standards to be accepted by good friends. The more obedient you are, the more you stand for true principles, the more the Lord can help you overcome temptation.²

You can also help others because they will feel your strength. Let them know about your standards by consistently living them. Answer questions about your principles when you are asked, but avoid being preachy. I know from personal experience that works.

No one intends to make serious mistakes. They come when you compromise your standards to be more accepted by others. You be the strong one. You be the leader. Choose good friends and resist peer pressure together.

How can we resist bad thoughts?

Question: How do we keep bad thoughts from entering our minds, and what do we do when they come?

Answer: Some bad thoughts come by themselves. Others come because we invite them by what we look at and listen to.³ Talking about or looking at immodest pictures of a woman's body can stimulate powerful emotions. It will tempt you to watch improper videocassettes or movies. These things surround you, but you must not participate in them.

Work at keeping your thoughts clean by thinking of something good.⁴ The mind can think of only one thing at a time. Use that fact to crowd out ugly thoughts.⁵ Above all, don't feed thoughts by reading or watching things that are wrong. If you don't control your thoughts, Satan will keep tempting you until you eventually act them out.⁶

Why is the law of chastity so important?

Question: Why is the law of chastity so important? Why is sex before marriage wrong?

Answer: Fundamental to the great plan of happiness and central to the teachings of the Savior is the family. A new family begins when a man and woman make sacred marriage vows and are legally bound together to become husband and wife, father and mother.

The perfect beginning is through sealing in the temple.

With marriage they commit the best of themselves to be absolutely loyal to each other and to invite children to be nurtured and taught. The father assumes his role as provider and protector, the mother her role as the heart of the home, with her tender, loving, nurturing influence. Together they strive to instill in themselves and their children principles such as prayer, obedience, love, giving of oneself, and the quest for knowledge.

Within the enduring covenant of marriage, the Lord permits husband and wife the expression of the sacred procreative powers in all their loveliness and beauty within the bounds He has set.⁷ One purpose of this private, sacred, intimate experience is to provide the physical bodies for the spirits Father in Heaven wants to experience mortality. Another reason for these powerful and beautiful feelings of love is to bind husband and wife together in loyalty, fidelity, consideration of each other, and common purpose.

However, those intimate acts are forbidden by the Lord outside the enduring commitment of marriage because they undermine His purposes.⁸ Within the sacred covenant of marriage, such relationships are according to His plan. When experienced any other way, they are against His will. They cause serious emotional and spiritual harm. Even though participants do not realize that is happening now, they will later.

Sexual immorality creates a barrier to the influence of the Holy Spirit with all its uplifting, enlightening, and empowering capabilities. It causes powerful physical and emotional stimulation. In time, that creates an unquenchable appetite that drives the offender to ever more serious sin. It engenders selfishness and can produce aggressive acts such as brutality, abortion, sexual abuse,

and violent crime. Such stimulation can lead to acts of homosexuality, and they are evil and absolutely wrong.⁹

Sexual transgression would defile the priesthood you now hold, sap your spiritual strength, undermine your faith in Jesus Christ, and frustrate your ability to serve Him. Consistent, willing obedience increases your confidence and ability. It produces character that allows you to face difficult challenges and overcome them. It qualifies you to receive inspiration and power from the Lord.¹⁰

What are the limits of intimacy?

Question: They always tell us we shouldn't become sexually involved, but they never tell us the limits. What are they?

Answer: Any sexual intimacy outside of the bonds of marriage—I mean any intentional contact with the sacred, private parts of another's body, with or without clothing—is a sin and is forbidden by God. It is also a transgression to intentionally stimulate these emotions within your own body.¹¹

Satan tempts one to believe that there are allowable levels of physical contact between consenting individuals who seek the powerful stimulation of emotions they produce, and if kept within bounds, no harm will result. As a witness of Jesus Christ, I testify that is absolutely false. Satan particularly seeks to tempt one who has lived a pure, clean life to experiment through magazines, video-cassettes, or movies with powerful images of a woman's body. He wants to stimulate appetite to cause experimentation that quickly results in intimacies and defilement. Powerful habits are formed which are difficult to break. Mental and emotional scars result.

When you are mature enough to plan seriously for marriage, keep your expressions of feelings to those that are comfortable in the presence of your parents.¹² To help you keep these sacred

commandments, make a covenant with the Lord that you will obey them. Decide what you will do and will not do. When temptation comes, do not change your standards. Do not abandon them when circumstances seem to justify an exception. That is Satan's way to hurt you by making it seem that sometimes God's law does not apply. There are no exceptions.

How far is too far before marriage?

Question: Before you are married, how far is too far to go if it is with your girlfriend?

Answer: Before marriage there can be no sexual contact with a girlfriend, fiancée, or anyone else, period.¹³ While a commandment, that standard is for your happiness. That's why the Church counsels you to go in groups and not to date while you are young. Later, as you prepare for marriage, remember that true love elevates, protects, respects, and enriches another. It motivates you to make sacrifices for the girl you love. Satan would promote counterfeit love, which is really lust. That is driven by hunger to satisfy personal appetite. Protect the one you love by controlling your emotions to the limits set by the Lord. You know how to be clean. We trust you to do it.

How does a person repent of sexual sin?

Question: How do you go about repenting after a sexual sin is committed? What sins should you tell the bishop?

Answer: All of the sexual transgressions we have discussed require sincere repentance with the participation of the bishop. Should you have done any of this, repent now. It is wrong to violate these commandments of the Lord. It is worse to do nothing about it. Sin is like cancer in the body. It will never heal itself. It will become worse unless cured through repentance. Your parents can

help strengthen you. Then you can become clean and pure by repentance under the guidance of the bishop. He may seem to be busy or unavailable. Tell him you are in trouble and need help. He will listen.

A youth in serious trouble said, "I have done things that I knew were bad. I have been taught they were ever since I can remember. I know repentance is a great gift; without it I would be lost. But I'm not ready to repent of my sins, yet I know when I am ready I can." How tragic. The thought of intentionally committing serious sin now and repenting later is perilously wrong. Never do that.¹⁴ Many start that journey of intentional transgression and never make it back. Premeditated sin has greater penalties and is harder to overcome. If there is sin, repent now—while you can.

Stay morally clean

I pray that as we have talked, you have had feelings to do better.¹⁵ You hold the priesthood of God. That is a sacred responsibility¹⁶ and also a singular privilege.¹⁷ You will be fortified in your determination to live righteously as you study the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon. Listen to your parents, leaders, and the prophet we have sustained today. Have faith in the Savior. He will help you.¹⁸ Remember He said, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise."¹⁹

Please stay morally clean. The Lord will make that possible as you do your part with all your strength.²⁰ Jesus Christ lives, and He loves you. He will help you as you do your part. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946), p. 64; see also "Discourse by President Wilford

Woodruff," *Millennial Star*, 21 Oct. 1889, p. 657.

2. See 1 Corinthians 10:13.
3. See H. Burke Peterson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, pp. 58–61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, pp. 42–44.
4. See *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), pp. 278, 445–46.
5. See Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, pp. 23–24; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, pp. 27–28.
6. See Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, p. 61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, p. 47; see also Robert L. Simpson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1972, p. 144; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, p. 112.
7. See Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, p. 9; or *Ensign*, May 1974, p. 7.
8. See Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Apr. 1972, pp. 136–39; or *Ensign*, July 1972, pp. 111–13.
9. See Spencer W. Kimball, "President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality," *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, pp. 97–98.
10. See D&C 43:9, 15–16.
11. See Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, p. 8; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, p. 8; in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, pp. 6–7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, p. 6; "President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality," *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, p. 97.
12. See *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 283–84.
13. See *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), pp. 264–65, 280–81.
14. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 70–72.
15. See D&C 64:33–34.
16. See D&C 84:35–39; see also Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), pp. 124–25.
17. See *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 494.
18. See Moroni 10:32.

19. D&C 82:10.
20. See 3 Nephi 18:20.

President Monson

We have heard from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Bishop Richard C. Edgley, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will now speak to us, and he'll be followed by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, who was sustained as a member of the Seventy at April conference.

Bishop Richard C. Edgley

Confidence in shooting free throws

I, like many of you, take delight in watching the extraordinary performance of outstanding athletes on the field of competition. It is always a thrill to see the fulfillment of thousands of hours of practice, dedication, and sacrifice manifest through an unusual play, a last-second touchdown pass, a game-winning goal, or pressure-filled free throws. It always amazes me to see a basketball player step up to the free throw line and consistently, shot after shot, pressure upon pressure, calmly put the ball through the hoop—all net. Last year Jeff Hornacek, after joining the Utah Jazz in midseason, hit thirty-three consecutive free throws—a Jazz season record. *He was shooting with great confidence.*

I am interested in free throw records because I believe I also set a free throw record in high school—unrecorded, but a record that I believe would stand even today. It was in a game between my alma mater, Preston High, and Malad High in Idaho. It was played in the old Malad High School gymnasium in 1954.

Early in the game I was fouled in the act of shooting and was awarded two foul shots. I calmly stepped to the free throw line, set my toe about one-eighth of an inch from the line, and did my best imitation of my then basketball idol, Bob Cousy, by bouncing the ball twice, spinning it in my hands, taking a deep breath, and shooting. It was a pretty good imita-

tion—until I released the ball. I missed both shots.

A few moments later I was again at the foul line going through the same established routine. To my despair I missed again—twice. As fortune would have it, we were into the game only six or seven minutes, and I was at the line missing my sixth and seventh foul shots. As I approached my ninth and tenth shots, I noticed that the basket, which was regulation size at the beginning of the game, was in some magical way beginning to shrink. Each time I came to the line, it got smaller and smaller.

My confidence wasn't bolstered much as I saw images of distress in the faces of my teammates and expressions of calm glee and a twinkle in the eyes of my opponents each time I came to the line. By my fifteenth miss, my arms and legs were frozen stiff, and I could see the basket getting so small that even a softball couldn't pass through it. When I approached the line to miss my eighteenth consecutive free throw, the basket seemed about the size of a golf hole, and I knew that even Bob Cousy would not stand a chance. *I was not shooting with much confidence.*

Thankfully the final buzzer sounded and my record ceased at eighteen consecutive misses—a record not easily achievable and one I doubt any of you sports enthusiasts have ever witnessed. As I left the court, my confidence was devastated, and ahead of me remained

the frightening task of getting ready to face the foul line again in upcoming games.

My challenge was not so much related to foul shooting as it was to confidence. I am fully aware that when Jeff Hornacek was establishing his record, each time he approached the line he was full of confidence, and the basket, in its magical way, was getting larger and larger. Confidence was the big difference.

Confidence in the presence of God

As recorded in the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 45, the Lord tells Joseph Smith during his hour of deep despair in Liberty Jail, "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dew from heaven." What a wonderful promise for us bearers of the priesthood—confidence in the presence of God!

Each of us present in this great body of the priesthood has been called and ordained of God. We are His emissaries and have entered into a holy covenant with Him to honor and magnify the priesthood, and this becomes our most important and sacred assignment on earth. I repeat—our most important assignment on earth is to honor and magnify the priesthood. It is more important than hitting crucial free throws. It is more important than catching a touchdown pass or kicking goals. It is more important than being accepted by your peers. It is more important than closing on a vital business transaction.

Making the basket bigger or smaller

Every time we use the priesthood, whether by assignment or through voluntary acts of service, it is as though we are stepping up to the foul line. Every time the priesthood is tested by tempta-

tion or trial, it is as though we are stepping up to the foul line. The hits and the misses that have preceded the moment of testing have a great bearing on how we will perform the next shot. Our spiritual confidence is largely determined by our prior spiritual successes and, unfortunately, by our prior spiritual mishaps. Our prior choices will greatly influence how our spiritual basket will look, large or small, the next time we are at the line.

We cannot say we will sow a few wild oats in our youth or that we will just dabble a little around the fringes of sin. There are no fringes of sin. Every act, good or bad, has a consequence. Every good act improves our ability to do good and more firmly stand against sin or failure. Every transgression, regardless of how minor, makes us more susceptible to Satan's influence the next time he tempts us. Satan takes us an inch at a time, deceiving us as to the consequences of so-called minor sins until he captures us in major transgressions. Nephi describes this technique as one of pacifying, lulling, and flattering us away until Satan "grasps [us] with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance" (2 Nephi 28:22; see also v. 21). There are no fringes of sin. We are constantly shooting our foul shots, and the basket is either getting bigger or, as Satan would have it, smaller. Our confidence is either waxing strong in the Lord or waxing strong in Satan.

Nephi, David, and Joseph Smith see the basket as large

When Nephi and his brothers were asked to go back to Jerusalem for the plates of brass, Nephi, because of his past experiences and preparation, saw the basket as very large. He knew he could do it. He said, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that

they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7). On the other hand, Laman and Lemuel, who already had a history of complaining and neglecting their responsibilities, saw the basket as very small and thus rebelled. Laman and Lemuel did not have the confidence or the faith that comes from righteous preparation. They did not believe they could make the shot.

When David went to battle against Goliath, he was discouraged by Saul, who reminded him that he was just a child and was not able to go against this giant, Goliath. David replied, "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth" (1 Samuel 17:34-35). David had made his previous foul shots, and he saw the basket as very large.

When Joseph Smith went into the grove of trees, when he began the translation of the Book of Mormon, and when he organized the Church with just six members, his confidence was strong in the Lord.

Wise choices increase our confidence

The Savior talked about teaching line upon line and precept upon precept (see 2 Nephi 28:30). This is also how we prepare ourselves to magnify our callings—act upon act and deed upon deed. Each good act makes the basket larger and prepares us to further magnify our callings. When you young Aaronic Priesthood bearers administer and pass the sacrament worthily and reverently,

the view of the basket becomes a little larger, as does your confidence in the Lord and your ability to act in righteousness. For those who have withstood so-called minor temptations, your ability to overcome Satan in the moments of major testing becomes easier. For those of you who have developed a relationship with your Heavenly Father and the Savior through scripture study and prayer, your basket is large and your confidence waxes strong.

I am acutely aware that each of us sees our own basket as a different size. Some may feel as though they are on a string of eighteen consecutive misses, and the basket they are now shooting at is very diminished. I have known men, young and old, whose previous decisions or actions have caused them to lose confidence in themselves and in the Lord. It was as though their arms and legs were frozen stiff, and the task of breaking the cycle of sin or failure seemed almost insurmountable. But a true understanding of the Savior's mission lets us know that through true repentance our baskets can be restored to regulation size. Every wise choice, every responsible exercising of the priesthood, and every act of service enhances our confidence in the Lord.

Brethren of the priesthood, let us hit our foul shots, *let us do our duty*—every single time we step to the line—that our confidence might wax strong in the presence of God, that the doctrine of the priesthood may distill upon our souls as the dews from heaven—for we are the priesthood of God. Of this I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf

My dear brethren, it is wonderful and humbling to be with you tonight in this vast assembly of priesthood holders. I am especially grateful for the sol-

emn experience we had this morning, in which I learned again how the Lord is directing and guiding His church in these latter days.

Miracle of family's conversion

A few days ago my profession as a B-747 captain took me home on a flight from Dallas, Texas, to Frankfurt, Germany. It was a moonless night over the North Atlantic, and myriads of stars covered the sky. As I contemplated this awesome sight from the cockpit, my thoughts went to the many miracles I have seen in my life.

Forty-five years ago, shortly after the horrors of the Second World War, at age eight I was baptized in Zwickau, Sachsen, in eastern Germany. This came about because a white-haired, courageous, and caring lady shared the restored gospel of Jesus Christ with my grandmother and parents, and they did not hesitate to accept the challenge. How I love them for that! In 1952 my family had to leave that part of my homeland, expecting never to see it again. We went to Frankfurt, where I was ordained a deacon and taught by tough but loving leaders to appreciate the value of work and service.

At the same time, in the heart of western Germany, another marvelous lady, recently widowed, still in her thirties, was terrified by the difficulties of the future. She had two young daughters and felt left alone in a country without hope. Right then two young missionaries rang the doorbell and brought the message of light, truth, and hope.

I give thanks eternally to those diligent American missionaries and most of all to Sister Carmen Reich, who became my mother-in-law, for her faith, strength, and willingness to listen to the still, small voice. My life has been very different because of the miraculous insight of these great individuals.

Miracle of German reunification

In those years many Saints left Europe to go to Zion. But then the Brethren taught us that Zion could be

anywhere around the globe if we were willing to establish it. The Saints had faith and stayed, and Zion increased in beauty and holiness. Stakes were organized and strengthened. Nevertheless, Germany still had two completely different political systems divided by concrete-walled boundaries.

My eternal partner—my wife, Harriet—encouraged me never to lose hope that someday there would be one Germany again. How grateful I am for her, her love and partnership, and for our family.

In 1976, President Monson gave my country a blessing with promises far beyond logical or political reasoning. It was a prophetic promise which required modern-day miracles. And the miracles occurred.

In 1989 the Berlin Wall fell, and this week, four years ago, Germany was reunited. The borders were enlarged, and Zion was enabled to put on her beautiful garments. There are now two temples in Germany, five temples in Europe, and more to come. The kingdom of God is expanding rapidly into the eastern parts of Europe and even moving far beyond geographic or political boundaries of yesterday. Missionaries are now serving at places most of us have to look up in dictionaries or cannot find easily on maps.

I am grateful for the Saints in Europe, for their strong testimonies, which are visible in the conduct of their everyday lives. Their faith has given me comfort and security. Their examples have helped me to find and keep the right direction in days of challenge and questioning.

The gospel is the only valid basis

That dark night over the North Atlantic, safely directing our big jet to its destination, we had to be extremely careful and precise in creating the navigational basis by entering the geographic coordinates into the navigational refer-

ence system. It had to be true and valid because it was the foundation for all future decisions. In 1979 a flight started in New Zealand on wrong coordinates and crashed into Mount Erebus at the South Pole.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the *only true and valid basis* for our lives. If we enter it into our system—into “all [our] heart, might, mind and strength” (D&C 4:2)—we will know how to choose the right and to whom to listen.

On long-range flights the shortwave radio frequencies are often crowded, and static distorts the messages. The same is true for our lives. Everybody wants to get their message across. We have to train and condition ourselves to hear the still, small voice, never to be distracted or stop listening because of too much static on that sacred frequency. This can best be done by internalizing and acting according to the moral and ethical standards we receive from the scriptures and the living prophets.

From the Prophet Joseph Smith to President Howard W. Hunter, we are

receiving updated sacred guidance according to our needs and readiness. The general conference messages by our prophets, seers, and revelators are given to us by the Lord in his own time, in his own way, and for a very special purpose.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made the miracle of forgiveness and redemption possible. This is truly the Church of Jesus Christ; it proclaims a gospel of joy, hope, courage, truth, love, and miracles. This I bear humble witness of in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Bishop Richard C. Edgley, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, and Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Oh Say, What Is Truth?”

The choir and congregation sang “Oh Say, What Is Truth?”

President Thomas S. Monson

My brother's keeper

President Hunter has invited me to be the next speaker, and I'm pleased to respond.

My dear brethren, I am confident that you, as I, have seen the newscasts on television and have heard them on radio, have read feature articles published by weekly and monthly magazines, and have observed the glaring headlines in daily newspapers. They all describe the fighting in Bosnia, tribal conflicts in Africa, and extensive flooding in Georgia and Florida. The parade of devastation, loss of homes, damage to farms, ruin of businesses, and, above all, frightful human suffering and death continues almost without interruption.

After expressions of sorrow, the shaking of one's head in incredible disbelief, and, yes, even the wringing of the hands in frustration, the question is asked, “When are *they* going to do something about this terrible suffering?”

Long years ago a similar question was posed and preserved in holy writ, even the Bible:

“And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

“And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?”¹

This evening I felt to present to you a response to this question which repre-

sents a collective reply from Church members everywhere and from the Church itself. But first a brief background.

The worth of a human soul

In March of 1967, early in my service as a member of the Council of the Twelve, I was attending a conference of the Monument Park West Stake in Salt Lake City. My companion for the conference was a member of the General Church Welfare Committee, Paul C. Child. President Child was a student of the scriptures. He had been my stake president during my Aaronic Priesthood years. Now we were together as conference visitors.

When it was his opportunity to participate, President Child took in hand the Doctrine and Covenants and left the pulpit to stand among the priesthood brethren to whom he was directing his message. He turned to section 18 and began to read:

"Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God. . . .

"And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!"²

President Child then raised his eyes from the scriptures and asked the brethren, "What is the worth of a human soul?" He avoided calling on a bishop, a stake president, or a high counselor for a response. Instead he selected the president of an elders quorum, a brother who had been a bit drowsy and had missed the significance of the question. The startled man responded, "Brother Child, could you please repeat the question?"

The question was repeated: "What is the worth of a human soul?"

I knew President Child's style. I prayed fervently for that quorum president. He remained silent for what

seemed like an eternity and then declared, "Brother Child, the worth of a human soul is its capacity to become as God."

All present pondered that reply. Brother Child returned to the stand, leaned over to me, and said, "A profound reply; a profound reply!" He proceeded with his message, but I continued to reflect on that inspired response.

Another pioneer in Church welfare, Walter Stover, who died some months ago at the same age as President Ezra Taft Benson, was one who understood the worth of a human soul. At his funeral service this tribute was paid to Brother Stover: "He had the ability to see Christ in every face he encountered, and he acted accordingly. Legendary are his acts of compassionate help and his talent to lift heavenward every person whom he met. His guiding light was the Master's voice speaking, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these . . . , ye have done it unto me.'"³

Church members' humanitarian aid

The publication *Times and Seasons*, in its March 1842 issue, proclaimed the following: "Respecting how much a man . . . shall give . . . we have no special instructions . . . ; he is to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide for the widow, to dry up the tear of the orphan, to comfort the afflicted, whether in this church, or in any other [church], or in no church at all, wherever he finds them."⁴

Since the two special fast days in 1985, called for by the First Presidency, humanitarian efforts by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have reached into every corner of the globe. Millions of the earth's needy have been blessed as members of the Church have consecrated their means to provide life-sustaining food and clothing, establish immunization and infant feeding programs, teach basic literacy,

dig freshwater wells, foster village banks, create new jobs, sustain hospitals and orphanages, teach basic self-reliance, and act in many other ways to help Heavenly Father's children improve their lives both spiritually and temporally.

The scope of humanitarian aid given is dramatic:

- Total humanitarian cash donations: \$23,750,000
- Total value of assistance: \$72,480,000
- Countries served: 109
- Food distributed: 3,615 tons
- Medical equipment distributed: 243 tons

All of the foregoing is in addition to the conventional welfare program of the Church, fundamentally financed through regular fast-offering contributions.

The examples of humanitarian aid and on-the-scene testimonials are inspiring and heartwarming.

Helping Rwandan refugees

Following its colonial period, a series of tribal conflicts has decimated the population of Rwanda in Africa. In the spring of this year, open hostilities resumed, resulting in the deaths of more than half a million people. Refugees huddle in squalid and unhealthy camps within the borders of neighboring Zaire, Uganda, Tanzania, and Burundi.

Joining with the efforts of other agencies in the international community, this church has committed \$1.2 million in goods and cash for refugee relief. Most of the promised assistance has already been consigned or shipped through four helping agencies—even Catholic Relief Services, the International Committee of the Red Cross, C.A.R.E., and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Continuing efforts are planned to help stem the tide of pain among these children of our Heavenly Father.

Helping former Yugoslavians

In Yugoslavia, following the demise of the former government, the country disintegrated into ethnic factions. The resulting civil conflict has claimed thousands of lives and inflicted hardship, heartache, and suffering upon millions.

Working with seven different humanitarian agencies, the Church has provided, since 1991, food, clothing, blankets, hygiene kits, and medical supplies valued at \$850,000. This is in addition to personal contributions by our members in other European nations.

In May 1993 Danijela Curcic of Zagreb, Croatia, wrote this letter addressed to Church headquarters, expressing her gratitude for food shared by the Saints.

"Dear Charitable Persons,

"I would like to thank you for every good thing that you've done for the people in my country. This horrible civil war is a crime which doesn't spare anything and anybody. Uncounted numbers of refugees, thousands of dead children are about us everywhere. I respect with all my heart you dear friends because you showed you care. It's easier and doesn't hurt as much when you're aware of the fact that there are nice people who are willing to help you."

Helping flood victims in Georgia

Closer to home, but serviced by conventional welfare procedures, are the victims of the devastating south Georgia flood of 1994. Thirty-five thousand families were evacuated, five thousand people found temporary refuge in two of our chapels, and nine eighteen-wheel truckloads of food and supplies were provided by the Church, primarily to other than members of our church.

Our own Church spearhead unit, carrying emergency welfare supplies, was on site with everything requested just five hours after being activated by the Area President.

On the first weekend of the flood, 500 member volunteers assisted in the cleanup of 1,569 damaged houses. The next weekend, more than 5,500 volunteers arrived and helped—all from units of the Church from a wide area well beyond the stricken region.

Priesthood volunteers from the Jacksonville Florida West Stake worked all weekend cleaning up a house which had been nearly submerged by the flood. The owner, a retired nonmember named Davis, was overwhelmed by the help provided. When the work was completed, the brethren asked Mr. Davis if they could bless his house. They gathered together, and the bishop pronounced a blessing on the home and on the family. Tears ran down Mr. Davis's cheeks, and the Spirit was very strong. Each of the volunteers hugged him and told him how glad they were to have been of help. He said they had done more than they could ever know and that he didn't know how to thank them enough.

The response of the membership of the Church, and particularly the priesthood performance in such situations, touches the heart and is a marvel to behold. Thus it has ever been.

Elder Benson's mission to Europe

From an earlier period, following the carnage of World War II, Elder Ezra Taft Benson led Church response in providing food, medicine, and clothing—totaling two million in 1940s dollars and requiring 133 boxcars to transport it—to the cold and starving members in Europe. This desperately needed aid saved lives, rescued the dispirited, and brought a newness of hope and quickened prayers of thanksgiving and expressions of profound gratitude from one and all. "Charity never faileth."⁵

George Albert Smith gives his coat

During a drive to amass warm clothing to ship to suffering Saints, Elder

Harold B. Lee and Elder Marion G. Romney took President George Albert Smith to Welfare Square in Salt Lake City. They were impressed by the generous response of the membership of the Church to the clothing drive and the preparations for sending the goods overseas. They watched President Smith observing the workers as they packaged this great volume of donated clothing and shoes. They saw tears running down his face. After a few moments, President Smith removed a new overcoat that he had on and said, "Please ship this also."

The Brethren said to him, "No, President, no; don't send that; it's cold and you need your coat."

But President Smith would not take it back.

The Apostle Paul's admonition surely was fulfilled that day: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."⁶

Holland's miracle of the potatoes

Two weeks ago Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Elder Robert K. Dellenbach, and I attended a regional conference in Holland. While meeting with the Saints, I recalled the miracle of the potatoes which took place in that nation in November of 1947.

In the first week of November 1947, ten huge trucks moved across Holland. They headed east and contained a costly cargo—seventy-five tons of potatoes, a gift from the Dutch Church members to the Saints in Germany.

Many months earlier, in the spring of 1947, the members within the Netherlands Mission were asked to begin a welfare project of their own, now that they had received much needed welfare supplies from the members in America. The proposal was welcomed with enthusiasm. The priesthood went to work, and within a short time every quorum

had found a suitable piece of land for the project. The recommended crop: potatoes. At the various branches of the Church there was singing, speaking, and praying, at the end of which the potatoes were entrusted to the soil. Soon there came news of good prospects for the harvest, and cautious estimates were made as to how large the yield would be.

During the time the potatoes were growing, Walter Stover, president of the East German Mission, visited the Netherlands Mission in Holland. During his visit, with tears in his eyes, he told of the hunger of the Church members in Germany. They were in worse condition than the Saints in the Netherlands. Supplies had not yet reached the Saints in Germany as quickly as they had the Saints in Holland.

When Cornelius Zappey, the Netherlands Mission president, heard the condition of the German Saints, he couldn't help but have compassion toward them, knowing how they had suffered. The thought came; the action followed: "Let's give our potatoes to the members of the Church in Germany." I'm sure he worried, for the German armies and the Dutch armies had been in conflict with each other. The Dutch had been starving. Would they respond? A Dutch widow who had received a sack of the potatoes heard that the bulk of the potatoes was to be given to the members in Germany, and she stepped forward and said, "My potatoes must be with them." And this hungry widow returned her sack of potatoes.

What are the words of the Lord pertaining to such an act? "Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury. . . . She of her want did cast in all that she had."⁷

Blessed is he that considereth the poor

It was President J. Reuben Clark Jr. who in 1936 declared: "The real long term objective of the Welfare Plan is the building of character in the members of the Church, givers and receivers, rescuing all that is finest down deep inside of them, and bringing to flower and fruitage the latent richness of the spirit, which after all is the mission and purpose and reason for being of this Church."⁸

"Am I my brother's keeper?" This ageless question has been answered! From the psalm of David comes the precious promise:

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

"The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.

"The Lord will strengthen him."⁹

Brethren, may the Lord strengthen each of us who holds the priesthood, that each may learn his duty as his brother's keeper and be found on the Lord's errand, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Genesis 4:8-9.
2. D&C 18:10, 15.
3. Matthew 25:40.
4. *Times and Seasons*, 15 Mar. 1842, p. 732.
5. 1 Corinthians 13:8.
6. 1 Timothy 4:12.
7. Mark 12:43-44.
8. Quoted in *Providing in the Lord's Way: A Leader's Guide to Welfare* [welfare handbook, 1990], p. i.
9. Psalm 41:1-3.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will now address us.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brethren, as I have listened to the proceedings of the conference this day, I have thought of what a glorious organization this is—this Church of Jesus Christ, moving forward in these latter days under the leadership of a true prophet, whom we sustain and love.

Dropping the ball

Bishop Edgley has told you a basketball story. I think I'd like to tell you a baseball story. I was reminded of it while watching a program on the Public Broadcasting System one evening not long ago. It was a program on baseball, once the great American pastime.

I recognize that baseball has little interest for people in most nations of the world, but I speak of it to highlight a principle that has meaning for people everywhere.

The event of which I speak occurred in the World Series of 1912. It was an eight-game series because one of the games was called at midpoint because of darkness. Playing fields were not electrically lighted at that time. It was the last game and the score was tied 1-1. The Boston Red Sox were at bat, the New York Giants in the field. A Boston batter knocked a high-arching fly. Two New York players ran for it. Fred Snodgrass in center field signaled to his associate that he would take it. He came squarely under the ball, which fell into his glove. It went right through his hand and fell to the ground. A howl went up in the stands. The roaring fans couldn't believe it. Snodgrass had dropped the ball. He had caught hundreds of fly balls before. But now, at this crucial moment, he dropped the ball.

The New York Giants lost. The Boston Red Sox won the series.

Snodgrass came back the following season and played brilliant ball for nine more years. He lived to be eighty-six

years of age, dying in 1974. But after that one slip, for sixty-two years when he was introduced to anybody, the expected response was, "Oh, yes, you're the one who dropped the ball."

Running the wrong way

Some of you older men may remember the Rose Bowl football game of 1929, when a player named Roy Riegels recovered a fumble and ran almost the length of the field toward the goal of his opponent. He was tackled and brought down by one of his own team, preventing a touchdown. He had lost his sense of direction in a moment of stress. His mistake cost his team a victory. He was a great player. He lived to be eighty-four, but ever afterward he was remembered as the man who ran the wrong way.

This phenomenon is not peculiar to sports. It happens every day in life.

There is the student who thinks he is doing well enough and then, under the stress of the final exam, flunks out.

There is the driver who all of his life has had a flawless record and then, in a moment of carelessness, is involved in a tragic accident.

There is the trusted employee whose performance has been excellent, and then he succumbs to the temptation to steal a little from his employer. A mark is placed upon him which never seems to entirely disappear.

There is the life lived with decency—and then comes the destructive, ever-haunting, one-time moral letdown.

There is the outburst of anger that suddenly destroys a long-cherished relationship. There is the little sin that somehow grows and eventually leads to separation from the Church.

In all of these, someone dropped the ball. He had the self-confidence, possibly even the arrogance, to think

that he didn't really have to try, that he could make it with only half an effort. But the ball passed through his hands and hit the ground, and he gave away the game. Or he thinks he makes a smart catch of someone else's fumble and runs the wrong way, only to give victory to his opponents.

It all points up the need to be constantly alert. It points up the importance of unrelenting self-discipline. It indicates the necessity of constantly building our strength against temptation. It warns us against the misuse of our time, especially our idle time.

Story of young Eugene L. Roberts

At Brigham Young University we have had some great athletic coaches. We have them now and we have had them in the past. One of these of long ago was Eugene L. Roberts. He grew up in Provo and drifted aimlessly with the wrong kind of friends. Then something remarkable happened. I read you his own words. He wrote:

"Several years ago when Provo City was scarred with unsightly saloons and other questionable forms of amusement, I was standing one evening on the street, waiting for my gang to show up, when I noticed that the [Provo] tabernacle was lighted up and that a large crowd was moving in that direction. I had nothing to do so I drifted over there and went in. I thought I might find some of my gang, or at least some of the girls that I was interested in. Upon entering, I ran across three or four of the fellows and we placed ourselves under the gallery where there was a crowd of young ladies, who seemed to promise entertainment. We were not interested in what came from the pulpit. We knew that the people on the rostrum were all old fogies. They didn't know anything about life, and they certainly couldn't tell us anything, for we knew it all. So we settled down to have a good time. Right in the midst of

our disturbance there thundered from the pulpit the following [statement]:

"You can't tell the character of an individual by the way he does his daily work. Watch him when his work is done. See where he goes. Note the companions he seeks, and the things he does when he may do as he pleases. Then you can tell his true character."

"I looked up toward the rostrum," Roberts continued, "because I was struck with this powerful statement. I saw there a slim, dark-haired fierce-eyed fighting-man whom I knew and feared; but didn't have any particular love for."

As he continued, "[the speaker] went on to make a comparison. He said: 'Let us take the eagle, for example. This bird works as hard and as efficiently as any other animal or bird in doing its daily work. It provides for itself and its young by the sweat of its brow, so to speak; but when its daily work is over and the eagle has time of its own to do just as it pleases, note how it spends its recreational moments. It flies in the highest realms of heaven, spreads its wings and bathes in the upper air, for it loves the pure, clean atmosphere and the lofty heights.

"On the other hand, let us consider the hog. This animal grunts and grubs and provides for its young just as well as the eagle; but when its working hours are over and it has some recreational moments, observe where it goes and what it does. The hog will seek out the muddiest hole in the pasture and will roll and soak itself in filth, for this is the thing it loves. People can be either eagles or hogs in their leisure time.'

"Now when I heard this short speech," said Gene Roberts, "I was dumbfounded. I turned to my companions abashed for I was ashamed to be caught listening. What was my surprise to find everyone of the gang with his attention fixed upon the speaker and his eyes containing a far-away expression.

"We went out of the tabernacle that evening rather quiet and we separated

from each other unusually early. I thought of that speech all the way home. I classified myself immediately as of the hog family. I thought of that speech for years. That night there was implanted within me the faintest beginnings of ambition to lift myself out of the hog group and to rise to that of the eagle. . . .

"There was instilled within me that same evening, the urge to help fill up the mud holes in the social pasture so that those people with hog tendencies would find it difficult to wallow in recreational filth. As a result of constant thinking about that speech, I was stirred to devote my whole life and my profession toward developing wholesome recreational activities for the young people, so that it would be natural and easy for them to indulge in the eagle-type of leisure.

"The man who made that speech which affected my life more than any other speech I ever heard, was President George H. Brimhall. May God bless him!" (Raymond Brimhall Holbrook and Esther Hamilton Holbrook, *The Tall Pine Tree: The Life and Work of George H. Brimhall* [n.p., 1988], pp. 111-13).

Choose to be eagles, not hogs

That simple story, told by a great teacher, turned around the life of a drifter and made of him an able and gifted leader. I repeat it tonight because I think that most of us are constantly faced with a choice of whether we wallow in the mire or fly to lofty heights.

What we do in our leisure time can make such a tremendous difference. Pity the poor man or boy of low purpose and weak ambition who, after a day of work, finishes his evening meal and then turns to the television screen for the rest of the evening to watch pornographic videotapes or sleazy late-night programs. Can you think of any picture which more nearly approaches President Brimhall's description of the hog that seeks the

mudhole in the pasture and wallows in the mire?

There is a better way, my brethren. Do you want to drop the ball in your lives? Do you wish to help Satan score? There is no surer way than to become engulfed in the tide of pornography that is sweeping over us. If we succumb to it, it destroys us, body and mind and soul.

On the other hand, the whole design of the gospel is to lead us onward and upward to greater achievement, even, eventually, to godhood. This great possibility was enunciated by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the King Follet sermon and emphasized by President Lorenzo Snow. It is this grand and incomparable concept: *As God now is, man may become!* (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], pp. 342-62; *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, comp. Clyde J. Williams [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984], p. 1).

Our enemies have criticized us for believing in this. Our reply is that this lofty concept in no way diminishes God the Eternal Father. He is the Almighty. He is the Creator and Governor of the universe. He is the greatest of all and will always be so. But just as any earthly father wishes for his sons and daughters every success in life, so I believe our Father in Heaven wishes for his children that they might approach him in stature and stand beside him resplendent in godly strength and wisdom.

Put on the whole armor of God

Today is a part of eternity. As Amulek in the Book of Mormon declared, "This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32).

Eternal vigilance is the price of eternal development. Occasionally we may stumble. I thank the Lord for the great principle of repentance and forgiveness. When we drop the ball, when we make a

mistake, there is held out to us the word of the Lord that he will forgive our sins and remember them no more against us. But somehow we are prone to remember them against ourselves.

For the priesthood of this church, it is so important that we walk the high road.

As Paul admonished:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world. . . .

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; . . .

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:10-12, 14, 16).

All of us live in the world. Of course we do. We cannot live a cloistered existence. But we can live in the world without partaking of the unseemly ways of the world.

Don't drop the ball

The pull gets ever stronger. The adversary is clever and subtle. He speaks in a seductive voice of fascinating and attractive things. We cannot afford to let down our guard. We cannot afford to drop the ball. We need not run the wrong way. The right way is simple. It means following the program of the Church, bringing into our lives the principles of the gospel, and never losing sight of what is expected of us as sons of God with a great inheritance and a marvelous and eternal potential.

Simple and tremendously challenging are the words of the Scout Oath: "On my honor I will do my best." If every one of us would make that effort,

the world would be much better, and we would be much happier. It is so often the very small and singularly inconsequential acts of our lives that eventually make so great a difference. I'm confident Brother Uchtdorf would agree that a giant airplane flying one degree off course will, unless it is corrected, simply fly in circles until its fuel is exhausted and it falls. The history of this church is replete with cases of men who started on the road to apostasy with small, seemingly unimportant decisions. Oliver Cowdery was one of them. Martin Harris was one of them. David Whitmer was one of them.

Thomas B. Marsh, the first President of the Quorum of the Twelve, sided with his wife in an argument over a little cream. He would not let the matter drop and carried it to the highest councils of the Church. He lost his place and never fully regained it. He dropped the ball at a crucial time and has been remembered ever since for what he did (in George A. Smith, *Journal of Discourses*, 3:283-84).

The Lord is forgiving, but sometimes life is not forgiving.

In the world in which we walk, we must be careful. The temptations are tremendous. We all know about them. The little decisions can be so crucial and so everlastingly important in their consequences.

Live with goodness and consistency

We must strengthen one another, help one another, play the game together if we are to win the victory. Don't forget Fred Snodgrass. It should never have happened. He gave away the World Series. Don't forget Roy Riegels. He ran the wrong way and thought the crowd was cheering him on when they were bemoaning his mistake. Stay away from the mire in the pastures of life. Look upward to the heavens and draw strength therefrom. As holders of the priesthood, we must live by a greater

loyalty than other men. We must live with loyalty to God, in whose name we are authorized to speak and act.

Thank you, my brethren, for the goodness and consistency of your lives. This work is becoming as a city set upon a hill, whose light cannot be hid because so many of you are true and faithful. May the Lord bless you. May he grant unto you peace in your lives, that peace which comes with honesty and integrity and prayer. May he bless you with the love of your families, your wives, and your children. May he bless all of us with strength to live with consistency without stumbling as we walk the way of immortality and eternal life, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

President Howard W. Hunter

My dear brethren of the priesthood, I consider it a privilege to meet with you this evening in this general priesthood meeting. The priesthood is the greatest brotherhood on the earth. I feel great strength in seeing your faithfulness and feeling your love and sustaining vote. We are particularly grateful to have so many of our Aaronic Priesthood brethren here with their fathers or advisers.

Marriage is a sacred privilege and obligation

The subject of my address this evening will be more particularly directed to the husbands and fathers. All of you who hold the Aaronic Priesthood will soon arrive at the years of marriage and fatherhood. Therefore, what I say tonight has application to all present.

It will now be our privilege to listen to the counsel of our beloved prophet, President Howard W. Hunter, who will be our concluding speaker.

Before hearing his remarks, we remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. Those desiring to attend the broadcast and the Sunday morning session, which will follow, must be in their seats before 9:15 A.M.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude to the combined men's chorus from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus for the inspiring music this evening.

Following President Hunter's address, the choir will conclude by singing "Beautiful Savior." The benediction will be offered by Elder Lowell D. Wood of the Seventy.

I wish to speak of the relationship that a man holding the priesthood should have with his wife and children. With a knowledge of the plan of salvation as a foundation, a man who holds the priesthood looks upon marriage as a sacred privilege and obligation. It is not good for man nor for woman to be alone. Man is not complete without woman. Neither can fill the measure of their creation without the other (see 1 Corinthians 11:11; Moses 3:18). Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God (see D&C 49:15-17). Only through the new and everlasting covenant of marriage can they realize the fulness of eternal blessings (see D&C 131:1-4; 132:15-19). As a matter of priesthood responsibility, a man, under normal circumstances, should not unduly postpone marriage. Brethren,

the Lord has spoken plainly on this matter. It is your sacred and solemn responsibility to follow his counsel and the words of his prophets.

The prophets of the past have spoken also of those who may not have opportunity to marry in this life. President Lorenzo Snow said:

"There is no Latter-day Saint who dies after having lived a faithful life who will lose anything because of having failed to do certain things when opportunities were not furnished him or her. In other words, if a young man or a young woman has no opportunity of getting married, and they live faithful lives up to the time of their death, they will have all the blessings, exaltation, and glory that any man or woman will have who had this opportunity and improved it. That is sure and positive" (*The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, comp. Clyde J. Williams [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984], p. 138).

I believe President Snow's statement to be true.

Show perfect moral fidelity

A man who holds the priesthood shows perfect moral fidelity to his wife and gives her no reason to doubt his faithfulness. A husband is to love his wife with all his heart and cleave unto her and none else (see D&C 42:22-26). President Spencer W. Kimball explained:

"The words *none else* eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes pre-eminent in the life of the husband or wife and neither social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], p. 250).

The Lord forbids and his church condemns any and every intimate relationship outside of marriage. Infidelity on the part of a man breaks the heart of his wife

and loses her confidence and the confidence of his children (see Jacob 2:35).

Be faithful in your marriage covenants in thought, word, and deed. Pornography, flirtations, and unwholesome fantasies erode one's character and strike at the foundation of a happy marriage. Unity and trust within a marriage are thereby destroyed. One who does not control his thoughts and thus commits adultery in his heart, if he does not repent, shall not have the Spirit but shall deny the faith and shall fear (see D&C 42:23; 63:16).

Show reverence for motherhood

A man who holds the priesthood has reverence for motherhood. Mothers are given a sacred privilege to "bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of [the] Father continued, that he may be glorified" (D&C 132:63).

The First Presidency has said: "Motherhood is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind" (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75], 6:178). The priesthood cannot work out its destiny, nor can God's purposes be fulfilled, without our helpmates. Mothers perform a labor the priesthood cannot do. For this gift of life, the priesthood should have love unbounded for the mothers of their children.

Honor your wife's unique and divinely appointed role as a mother in Israel and her special capacity to bear and nurture children. We are under divine commandment to multiply and replenish the earth and to bring up our children and grandchildren in light and truth (see Moses 2:28; D&C 93:40). You share, as a loving partner, the care of the children. Help her to manage and keep up your home. Help teach, train, and discipline your children.

You should express regularly to your wife and children your reverence and respect for her. Indeed, one of the greatest things a father can do for his children is to love their mother.

Regard the family as most important

A man who holds the priesthood regards the family as ordained of God. Your leadership of the family is your most important and sacred responsibility. The family is the most important unit in time and in eternity and, as such, transcends every other interest in life.

We reiterate what was stated by President David O. McKay: "No other success [in life] can compensate for failure in the home" (quoting J. E. McCulloch, *Home: the Savior of Civilization*, p. 42; in Conference Report, Apr. 1935, p. 116) and President Harold B. Lee: "The most important of the Lord's work you and I will ever do will be within the walls of our own homes" (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], p. 255). Effective family leadership, brethren, requires both quantity and quality time. The teaching and governance of the family must not be left to your wife alone, to society, to school, or even to the Church.

Accept wife as an equal partner

A man who holds the priesthood accepts his wife as a partner in the leadership of the home and family with full knowledge of and full participation in all decisions relating thereto. Of necessity there must be in the Church and in the home a presiding officer (see D&C 107:21). By divine appointment, the responsibility to preside in the home rests upon the priesthood holder (see Moses 4:22). The Lord intended that the wife be a helpmeet for man (*meet* means equal)—that is, a companion equal and necessary in full partnership. Presiding

in righteousness necessitates a shared responsibility between husband and wife; together you act with knowledge and participation in all family matters. For a man to operate independently of or without regard to the feelings and counsel of his wife in governing the family is to exercise unrighteous dominion.

Be tender in the intimate relationship

Keep yourselves above any domineering or unworthy behavior in the tender, intimate relationship between husband and wife. Because marriage is ordained of God, the intimate relationship between husbands and wives is good and honorable in the eyes of God. He has commanded that they be one flesh and that they multiply and replenish the earth (see Moses 2:28; 3:24). You are to love your wife as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it (see Ephesians 5:25-31).

Tenderness and respect—never selfishness—must be the guiding principles in the intimate relationship between husband and wife. Each partner must be considerate and sensitive to the other's needs and desires. Any domineering, indecent, or uncontrolled behavior in the intimate relationship between husband and wife is condemned by the Lord.

Be loving, not abusive

Any man who abuses or demeans his wife physically or spiritually is guilty of grievous sin and in need of sincere and serious repentance. Differences should be worked out in love and kindness and with a spirit of mutual reconciliation. A man should always speak to his wife lovingly and kindly, treating her with the utmost respect. Marriage is like a tender flower, brethren, and must be nourished constantly with expressions of love and affection.

You who hold the priesthood must not be abusive in your relationship with children. Seek always to employ the principles of priesthood government set forth in the revelations (see D&C 93:40; 121:34–36, 41–45).

President George Albert Smith wisely counseled: “We should not lose our tempers and abuse one another. . . . Nobody ever abused anybody else when he had the spirit of the Lord. It is always when we have some other spirit” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1950, p. 8).

No man who has been ordained to the priesthood of God can with impunity abuse his wife or child. Sexual abuse of children has long been a cause for excommunication from the Church.

We encourage you, brethren, to remember that priesthood is a righteous authority only. Earn the respect and confidence of your children through your loving relationship with them. A righteous father protects his children with his time and presence in their social, educational, and spiritual activities and responsibilities. Tender expressions of love and affection toward children are as much the responsibility of the father as the mother. Tell your children you love them.

Provide temporal support

You who hold the priesthood have the responsibility, unless disabled, to provide temporal support for your wife and children. No man can shift the burden of responsibility to another, not even to his wife. The Lord has commanded that women and children have claim on their husbands and fathers for their maintenance (see D&C 83; 1 Timothy 5:8). President Ezra Taft Benson has stated that when a husband encourages or insists that his wife work out of the home for their convenience, “not only will the family suffer in such instances, . . . but [his] own spiritual

growth and progression will be hampered” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, pp. 60–61; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, p. 49).

We urge you to do all in your power to allow your wife to remain in the home, caring for the children while you provide for the family the best you can. We further emphasize that men who abandon their family and fail to meet their responsibility to care for those they have fathered may find their eligibility for a temple recommend and their standing in the Church in jeopardy. In cases of divorce or separation, men must demonstrate that they are meeting family support payments mandated by law and obligated by the principles of the Church in order to qualify for the blessings of the Lord.

Lead family in Church participation

A man who holds the priesthood leads his family in Church participation so they will know the gospel and be under the protection of the covenants and ordinances. If you are to enjoy the blessings of the Lord, you must set your own homes in order. Together with your wife, you determine the spiritual climate of your home. Your first obligation is to get your own spiritual life in order through regular scriptural study and daily prayer. Secure and honor your priesthood and temple covenants; encourage your family to do the same.

Teach the gospel to family members

Take seriously your responsibility to teach the gospel to your family through regular family home evening, family prayer, devotional and scripture reading time, and other teaching moments. Give special emphasis to preparation for missionary service and temple marriage. As patriarch in the home, exercise your priesthood through performing the

appropriate ordinances for your family and by giving blessings to your wife and children. Next to your own salvation, brethren, there is nothing so important to you as the salvation of your wife and children.

Brethren, I have spoken plainly to you regarding your responsibility as holders of the holy priesthood. If there are areas in your life where improvement may be needed, I encourage you to make this a matter of prayerful consideration.

I testify that this is what the Lord would have the brethren of the priesthood receive at this time. May you be blessed in your efforts to be righteous husbands and fathers, I pray as I bear solemn witness of the truthfulness of that which has been spoken this evening and do so in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Beautiful Savior."

Elder Lowell D. Wood offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 164th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 2, 1994. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session, with Jerold Ottley conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "The Morning Breaks." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

President Howard W. Hunter, who presides at this conference, has asked me, Brother Hinckley, to conduct this session.

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah. This is the fourth general session of the 164th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle, with every seat occupied; in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Robert D. Hales, Lynn A.

Mickelsen, and Stephen D. Nadauld are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders Hugh W. Pinnock and Helvécio Martins are in attendance.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of these various facilities, who are broadcasting the conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

This magnificent Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Jerold Ottley, with Brother John Longhurst at the organ, opened these services by singing "The Morning Breaks" and will now sing "Father in Heaven, We Do Believe," following which Elder Dean L. Larsen of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Father in Heaven, We Do Believe."

Elder Dean L. Larsen offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brethren and sisters, it becomes my responsibility to open this session in speaking to you.

I seek the direction of the Holy Spirit. I sense the tremendous responsibility of speaking to hundreds of thousands of Latter-day Saints, perhaps even millions, across the world.

I thank you for your gracious hospitality to us wherever we meet with you. It is truly a humbling experience to be the recipient of such generous kindness. You write letters of appreciation which bring encouragement. You are trying to live the gospel and rear your families in light and truth. You are truly Latter-day Saints, and I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to be one with you and to partake of your fellowship and your love.

A new generation of trees in Yellowstone

Sister Hinckley and I were recently involved in a regional conference in Rexburg, Idaho. We had not been to Yellowstone National Park for many years. We decided to drive to the conference and on Monday return home by way of Yellowstone.

In 1988 terrible forest fires raged there. Each day the news media brought us graphic reports of the intensity of the fires as they raced over thousands of acres, destroying millions of trees. The flames finally burned out, and people literally mourned over the desolate picture of countless lodgepole pines, their tops burned and the straight, scorched trunks standing like solemn grave markers in a crowded cemetery.

But when we visited there about a month ago, we saw something of captivating interest. The dead pines still stood, but between the burned trees new seedlings have sprung from the ground, millions of them.

Evidently when fire hit the treetops, the pinecones exploded, scattering seed to the ground. There is a new generation of trees now, young and beautiful and filled with promise. The old trees eventually will fall, and the new ones will grow tall to create a forest of great beauty and usefulness.

Children—the promise of the future

As we drove through the park, I thought of the wonders of nature, of the rhythm of our lives. We grow old, and I am among those who have done so. Our vitality and our powers slacken. But a new generation is at our feet. These are children. These too are sons and daughters of God whose time has come to take their place on earth. They are like the new growth in the park—young, tender, sensitive, beautiful, and full of promise.

As Tagore, the poet of India, once observed, "Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of man" (in Charles L. Wallis, ed., *The Treasure Chest* [New York: Harper and Row, 1965], p. 49). Children are the promise of the future. They are the future itself.

Tragedy of suffering children

The tragedy is that so many children are born to lives of sorrow, of hunger, of fear and trouble and want. Children become the victims, in so many, many cases, of man's inhumanity to man. In recent months we have seen them on our television screens—the children of Somalia, their bodies bloated, their eyes staring with the stare of death. More recently we have seen them in Rwanda, the victims of raging cholera and vicious and unrelenting hunger. Uncounted numbers have died.

These were the promise of a new and better generation in these lands,

where disease, malnutrition, bullets, and neglect have mowed them down like tender plants before the sharp blade of the sickle.

Why are men so vicious as to bring about the causes that lead to such terrible fratricidal conflict? Great, I believe, will be their tribulation in the Day of Judgment, when they must stand before the Almighty accused of the suffering and destruction of these little ones.

I am grateful for kind and generous people of many faiths and persuasions across the world whose hearts reach out in sympathy, many of whom give freely of their substance, their time, even their presence to help those in such terrible distress. I am grateful that we as a church have done much of significance, as President Monson pointed out last night, in sending medicines, food and clothing, and blankets for warmth and shelter to those who suffer so terribly, and particularly to children who otherwise most certainly would die.

Ease the plight of suffering children

Why should they suffer so much in so many places? Surely God, our Eternal Father, must weep when he sees the abuse that is heaped upon his little ones, for I am satisfied they hold a special place in his grand design. That place was confirmed when his Son, the Savior of the world, walked the dusty roads of Palestine:

"And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them.

"But Jesus . . . said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

"Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein" (Luke 18:15-17).

How great is our responsibility, how serious the responsibility of Christian

people and men and women of goodwill everywhere to reach out to ease the plight of suffering children, to lift them from the rut of despair in which they walk.

Of course such suffering is not new. Plagues of disease have in centuries past swept across continents. War has caused the deaths of millions who were totally innocent. Children have been bartered and traded; they have been used as tools by vicious masters; they have mined coal for long hours day after day in the dark and cold depths of the earth; they have worked in sweatshops and been exploited like cheap merchandise.

Surely after all of the history we have read, after all of the suffering of which we have been told, after all of the exploitation of which we are aware, we can do more than we are now doing to lift the blight that condemns millions of children to lives that know little of happiness, that are tragically brief, and that are filled with pain.

We need not travel halfway across the earth to find weeping children. Countless numbers of them cry out in fear and loneliness from the evil consequences of moral transgression, neglect, and abuse. I speak plainly, perhaps indelicately. But I know of no other way to make clear a matter about which I feel so strongly.

Fathers who abandon children

One major problem is the now common phenomenon of children bearing children, of children without fathers. Somehow there seems to be in the minds of many young men, and some not so young, the idea that there is no relationship between the begetting of a child and responsibility for its life thereafter. Every young man should realize that whenever a child is begotten outside the bonds of marriage, it has resulted from violation of a God-given commandment reaching at least as far back as Moses.

Further, let it be known clearly and understood without question that responsibility inevitably follows, and that this responsibility will continue throughout life. Though the mores of our contemporary society may have crumbled to a point where sexual transgression is glossed over or is regarded as acceptable, there will someday be accountability before the God of heaven for all that we do in violation of his commandments. I believe further that a sense of accountability must at some time bear upon every man who has fathered a child and then abandoned responsibility for its care. He must sometimes stop and wonder whatever became of the child he fathered, of the boy or girl who is flesh of his flesh and soul of his soul.

Burdens on single mothers and society

The burdens that fall upon a young woman who alone must rear her child are unbelievably heavy and consuming. They are likewise heavy upon society through taxes levied to meet the needs of such children and their mothers.

In the United States "in the six years between 1985 and 1990, estimated public outlays related to teenage child-bearing totalled more than \$120 billion. . . .

"Of [unmarried] teens who give birth, . . . 73 percent will be on welfare within four years [that is almost three out of every four].

"In 1991, federal and state expenditures for Aid to Families with Dependent Children . . . totalled \$20 billion plus administrative costs of \$2.6 billion" (*Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children* [New York: Carnegie Corporation, Apr. 1994], p. 21).

The obstacles facing children born and reared in such circumstances are formidable, to say the least.

Solutions to the problem

The answer is straightforward. It lies in adherence to the principles of the

gospel and the teaching of the Church. It lies in self-discipline.

Would that every youth might realize this and be governed accordingly. There would be so much less of heartache and heartbreak. Its importance cannot be overemphasized because the consequences are so serious and so everlasting.

I realize that notwithstanding all of the teaching that can be done, there will be those who will not heed and will go their willful way, only to discover to their shock and dismay that they are to become parents while they are scarcely older than children themselves.

Abortion is not the answer. This only compounds the problem. It is an evil and repulsive escape that will someday bring regret and remorse.

Marriage is the more honorable thing. This means facing up to responsibility. It means giving the child a name, with parents who together can nurture, protect, and love.

When marriage is not possible, experience has shown that adoption, difficult though this may be for the young mother, may afford a greater opportunity for the child to live a life of happiness. Wise and experienced professional counselors and prayerful bishops can assist in these circumstances.

Physical abuse

Then there is the terrible, inexcusable, and evil phenomenon of physical and sexual abuse.

It is unnecessary. It is unjustified. It is indefensible.

In terms of physical abuse, I have never accepted the principle of "spare the rod and spoil the child." I will be forever grateful for a father who never laid a hand in anger upon his children. Somehow he had the wonderful talent to let them know what was expected of them and to give them encouragement in achieving it.

I am persuaded that violent fathers produce violent sons. I am satisfied that such punishment in most instances does more damage than good. Children don't need beating. They need love and encouragement. They need fathers to whom they can look with respect rather than fear. Above all, they need example.

I recently read a biography of George H. Brimhall, who at one time served as president of Brigham Young University. Concerning him, someone said that he reared "his boys with a rod, but it [was] a fishing rod" (Raymond Brimhall Holbrook and Esther Hamilton Holbrook, *The Tall Pine Tree: The Life and Work of George H. Brimhall* [n.p., 1988], p. 62). That says it all.

Sexual abuse

And then there is the terrible, vicious practice of sexual abuse. It is beyond understanding. It is an affront to the decency that ought to exist in every man and woman. It is a violation of that which is sacred and divine. It is destructive in the lives of children. It is reprehensible and worthy of the most severe condemnation.

Shame on any man or woman who would sexually abuse a child. In doing so, the abuser not only does the most serious kind of injury. He or she also stands condemned before the Lord.

It was the Master himself who said, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6). How could he have spoken in stronger terms?

If there be any within the sound of my voice who may be guilty of such practice, I urge you with all of the capacity of which I am capable to stop it, to run from it, to get help, to plead with the Lord for forgiveness and make amends

to those whom you have offended. God will not be mocked concerning the abuse of his little ones.

The Savior's love for children

When the resurrected Lord appeared on this hemisphere and taught the people, the record states that as he spoke to them, "he wept, . . . and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them. And when he had done this he wept again" (3 Nephi 17:21-22).

There is no more tender and beautiful picture in all of sacred writing than this simple language describing the love of the Savior for little children.

Rewards of being good parents

Of all the joys of life, none other equals that of happy parenthood. Of all the responsibilities with which we struggle, none other is so serious. To rear children in an atmosphere of love, security, and faith is the most rewarding of all challenges. The good result from such efforts becomes life's most satisfying compensation.

President Joseph F. Smith said on one occasion: "After all, to do well those things which God ordained to be the common lot of all man-kind, is the truest greatness. To be a successful father or a successful mother is greater than to be a successful general or a successful statesman. One is universal and eternal greatness, the other is ephemeral" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 285).

I am satisfied that no other experiences of life draw us nearer to heaven than those that exist between happy parents and happy children.

My plea—and I wish I were more eloquent in voicing it—is a plea to save the children. Too many of them walk with pain and fear, in loneliness and

despair. Children need sunlight. They need happiness. They need love and nurture. They need kindness and refreshment and affection. Every home, regardless of the cost of the house, can provide an environment of love which will be an environment of salvation.

A happy home

May I in conclusion read to you a letter that came the other day. It speaks of the kind of home I have in mind. The writer says:

"I thought I would write to you to let you know that life is good. I sit here looking out the window at the beautiful mountains. The apple tree in the backyard is full of almost-ripe fruit, two cooing doves that we have been feeding and watching all summer are eating at the bird feeder, and the weather has finally cooled down.

"My husband and I have been married for twenty-six years, have five wonderful children, two sons-in-law, and a peaceful, happy home. I marvel at the love of the Lord in our lives. It runs through our marriage and family like a thread. I have nothing to complain about, and most of my fasts are 'thankful' fasts.

"My husband is in the stake presidency, . . . and I teach the Gospel Doctrine class. We have always worked in the Church and always enjoyed it. We enjoy the gospel, and it is marvelous to watch our children growing up to do the same.

"And so, I just wanted you to know that there is much love, joy, contentment, fun, and gratitude in our life."

Is that picture too good to be true? The writer does not think so. Is it too idealistic? I think not. I know nothing of the size of the house or the yard. That is immaterial. It is the spirit in that home,

the extension of the love of a good man who holds the priesthood of God and a good woman whose heart is filled with true affection and gratitude, and of children born of a sound marriage who have been nurtured and reared in an environment of peace and faith and security.

You may not have a mountain to look at where you live. You may not have an apple tree in the backyard. You may not have birds that feed at your porch. But you can have one another as husband and wife, father and mother, and children who live together with love, respect, self-discipline—and prayer, if you please.

Save the children

The old forest burns and dies. But there is a new one at its roots—one filled with wondrous potential. It is a thing beautiful to look upon—and destined to grow. It is the handiwork of God, a part of his divine plan.

Save the children. Too many suffer and weep. God bless us to be mindful of them, to lift them and guide them as they walk in dangerous paths, to pray for them, to bless them, to love them, to keep them secure until they can run with strength of their own, I pray in the name of him who loves them so very much, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "God So Loved the World."

President Hinckley

The Tabernacle Choir has just sung "God So Loved the World."

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

President Boyd K. Packer

When the funeral cortege traveled with the body of our beloved President Ezra Taft Benson to his final resting place at home in Idaho, every overpass was lined with people. There were along the way Scouts in uniform with flags. There were the elderly in camp chairs, even wheelchairs. Farmers left their equipment to stand in the field, and families dressed in their Sunday best paid their respects. Thousands of people expressed love for him, a spontaneous outpouring of love—all of which is now transferred to President Howard W. Hunter. His physical limitations actually enhance his capacity as prophet and seer. God bless him for the course that he has already set and the direction that he will yet give us.

Personal revelation

I speak to the youth of the Church, who now face “perilous times,” as the Apostle Paul prophesied would come in the last days.¹

In order to prepare you and protect you, I will tell you as plainly as I can what I have learned about personal revelation.

Dual beings

There are two parts to your nature—your temporal body born of mortal parents, and your immortal spirit within. You are a son or daughter of God.

Physically you can see with eyes and hear with ears and touch and feel and learn. Through your intellect you learn most of what you know about the world in which we live.

But if you learn by reason only, you will never understand the Spirit and how it works—regardless of how much you learn about other things.

The scriptures teach that “great men are not always wise.”² Spiritually you

may know *not*, and know *not* that you know *not* and be “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”³

Your spirit learns in a different way than does your intellect.

For “there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding,”⁴ and the Spirit of Christ “giveth light to every man that cometh into the world.”⁵

I will use the words *see*, *hear*, and *feel* to teach about revelation, but I will use them as they are used in the scriptures.

The gift of the Holy Ghost

Following baptism, in the ordinance of confirmation, you received the *gift* of the Holy Ghost.

While the Holy Ghost may inspire all mankind, the gift carries the right to have it as a “constant companion.”⁶ It is “by the power of the Holy Ghost [that you] may know the truth of all things.”⁷

We are told that “angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost.”⁸ We are even told that when we speak by the power of the Holy Ghost, we “speak with the tongue [or in the same language] of angels.”⁹

Prayer

You have your agency, and inspiration does not—perhaps cannot—flow unless you ask for it, or someone asks for you.

No message in scripture is repeated more often than the invitation, even the command, to pray—to ask.

Prayer is so essential a part of revelation that without it the veil may remain closed to you. Learn to pray. Pray often. Pray in your mind, in your heart. Pray on your knees.

Begin where you are

You must begin where you are. Pray, even if you are like the prophet Alma when he was young and wayward, or if you are like Amulek, of the closed mind, who “knew concerning these things, yet . . . would not know.”¹⁰

Prayer is *your* personal key to heaven. The lock is on your side of the veil.¹¹

Study

But that is not all. To one who thought that revelation would flow without effort, the Lord said:

“You have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

“But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your *mind*; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall *feel* that it is right.”¹²

This burning in the bosom is not purely a physical sensation. It is more like a warm light shining within your being.

Describing the promptings from the Holy Ghost to one who has not had them is very difficult. Such promptings are personal and strictly private!¹³

Still, small voice

The Holy Ghost speaks with a voice that you *feel* more than you *hear*. It is described as a “still small voice.”¹⁴ And while we speak of “listening” to the whisperings of the Spirit, most often one describes a spiritual prompting by saying, “I had a *feeling* . . .”

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained: “A person may profit by noticing the first intimation of the spirit of revelation; for instance, when you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas, so that

by noticing it, you may find it fulfilled the same day or soon; . . . those things that were presented unto your minds by the Spirit of God, will come to pass; and thus by learning the Spirit of God and understanding it, you may grow into the principle of revelation, until you become perfect in Christ Jesus.”¹⁵

Revelation comes as words we *feel* more than *hear*. Nephi told his wayward brothers, who were visited by an angel, “Ye were past *feeling*, that ye could not *feel* his words.”¹⁶

The scriptures are full of such expressions as “The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened,”¹⁷ or “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart,”¹⁸ or “I did enlighten thy mind,”¹⁹ or “Speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts.”²⁰ There are hundreds of verses which teach of revelation.

President Marion G. Romney, quoting the prophet Enos, said, “While I was thus struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind.”²¹ Enos then related what the Lord put into his mind.

“This,” President Romney said, “is a very common means of revelation. It comes into one’s mind in words and sentences. With this medium of revelation I am personally well acquainted.”²²

We do not seek for spectacular experiences. President Spencer W. Kimball spoke of the many who “have no ear for spiritual messages . . . when they come in common dress. . . . Expecting the spectacular, one may not be fully alerted to the constant flow of revealed communication.”²³

Prompting

This voice of the Spirit speaks gently, prompting you what to do or what to say, or it may caution or warn you.

Ignore or disobey these promptings, and the Spirit will leave you. It is your choice—your agency.

Faith

The flow of revelation depends on your faith. You exercise faith by causing, or by making, your mind accept or believe as truth that which *you* cannot, by reason alone, prove for certainty.²⁴

The first exercising of your faith should be your acceptance of Christ and His atonement.

As you test gospel principles by believing without knowing, the Spirit will begin to teach you. Gradually your faith will be replaced with knowledge.

You will be able to discern, or to *see*, with spiritual eyes.

Be believing and your faith will be constantly replenished, your knowledge of the truth increased, and your testimony of the Redeemer, of the Resurrection, of the Restoration will be as “a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life.”²⁵ You may then receive guidance on practical decisions in everyday life.

Word of Wisdom

Your body is the instrument of your mind. In your emotions, the spirit and the body come closest to being one. What you learn spiritually depends, to a degree, on how you treat your body. That is why the Word of Wisdom²⁶ is so important.

The habit-forming substances prohibited by that revelation—tea, coffee, liquor, tobacco—interfere with the delicate feelings of spiritual communication, just as other addictive drugs will do.

Do not ignore the Word of Wisdom, for that may cost you the “great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures”²⁷ promised to those who keep it. And good health is an added blessing.

Music

Make wholesome music of all kinds a part of your life.

Then learn what *sacred* music has to do with revelation. The Lord said, “My

soul delighteth in the song of the *heart*; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.”²⁸

Secular music may be inspiring in a classical or popular sense, but it will not prepare your mind to be instructed by the Spirit as will sacred music.

The Apostle Paul counseled the Ephesians to “be filled with the Spirit; *speaking to yourselves* in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody *in your heart* to the Lord.”²⁹

Reverence

Prelude music, reverently played, is nourishment for the spirit. It invites inspiration. That is a time to, as the poet said, “go to your bosom . . . and ask your heart what it doth know.”³⁰ Do not ever disturb prelude music for others, for reverence is essential to revelation. “Be still,” He said, “and know that I am God.”³¹

Now a warning! Some music is spiritually very destructive. You young people know what kind that is. The tempo, the sounds, and the lifestyle of those who perform it repel the Spirit. It is far more dangerous than you may suppose, for it can smother your spiritual senses.

Temptation

Now, young people, pay attention! Before I say another word about personal revelation, I must tell you so that you cannot possibly misunderstand: “There are many spirits which are false spirits.”³² There can be counterfeit revelations, promptings from the devil, temptations! As long as you live, in one way or another the adversary will try to lead you astray.

“For after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.”³³

The Prophet Joseph Smith said that "nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the Spirit of God."³⁴

The seventh chapter of Moroni in the Book of Mormon tells you how to test spiritual promptings. Read it carefully—over and over.

By trial, and some error, you will learn to heed these promptings.

If ever you receive a prompting to do something that makes you *feel* uneasy, something you know in your *mind* to be wrong and contrary to the principles of righteousness, do not respond to it!

The Church

The Lord reveals His will through dreams and visions, visitations, through angels, through His own voice, and through the voice of His servants.³⁵ "Whether by mine own voice," He said, "or by the voice of my servants, it is the same."³⁶

The Lord's house is a house of order. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "it is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church, or any one [else], to receive instruction for those in authority, higher than themselves."³⁷

You may receive revelation individually, as a parent for your family, or for those for whom you are responsible as a leader or teacher, having been properly called and set apart.

If you become critical and harbor negative feelings, the Spirit will withdraw. Only when you repent will the Spirit return. My experience is that the channels of inspiration always follow that order. You are safe following your leaders.

The Comforter

Now do not suppose that you will be spared from sorrow, disappointment,

failure, fear. These come to all. They are essential to our testing.

When sore trials come, you will learn why the Holy Ghost is called the Comforter.

You must face life "led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which [you] should do,"³⁸ just as Nephi did.

You may not yet have a certain witness that Jesus is the Christ. Exercise your faith and trust in those who do.

I have that certain witness. It came to me in my youth. During those early periods of doubt, I leaned on the testimony of a seminary teacher. Although I did not know, somehow I *knew* that he *knew*.

The Lord said:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments.

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."³⁹

I bear witness of the power of the Spirit and thank God that this incomparable gift is given to you, our youth, to guide you as you move forward to a happy life, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Timothy 3:1.
2. Job 32:9.
3. 2 Timothy 3:7.
4. Job 32:8.
5. D&C 84:46.
6. D&C 121:46.
7. Moroni 10:5; see also 2 Nephi 32:5.
8. 2 Nephi 32:3.
9. 2 Nephi 31:13; 32:2.
10. Alma 10:6.
11. See Revelation 3:20.

12. D&C 9:7–8; italics added.
13. See 1 Nephi 14:28–30; 2 Nephi 32:7; Alma 12:9–11.
14. D&C 85:6.
15. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 151.
16. 1 Nephi 17:45; italics added.
17. D&C 110:1.
18. D&C 8:2.
19. D&C 6:15.
20. D&C 100:5.
21. Enos 1:10.
22. In Conference Report, Apr. 1964, p. 124; or *Improvement Era*, June 1964, p. 506.
23. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), p. 457.
24. See Alma 32:27–28, 38.
25. D&C 63:23; see also John 4:14; Jeremiah 2:13.
26. See D&C 89.
27. D&C 89:19.
28. D&C 25:12; italics added.
29. Ephesians 5:18–19; italics added.
30. William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, act 2, scene 2, lines 136–37.
31. Psalm 46:10.
32. D&C 50:2; see also v. 3.
33. Moroni 7:17.
34. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 205.
35. See D&C 43:25.
36. D&C 1:38.
37. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 21.
38. 1 Nephi 4:6.
39. John 14:15–18.

The choir sang “Come, O Thou King of Kings.”

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just addressed us. The Tabernacle Choir then sang “Come, O Thou King of Kings.”

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.” We shall then hear from Elder L. Aldin Porter, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang
“I Know That My Redeemer Lives.”

Elder L. Aldin Porter

“I have warned you, and forewarn you”

A few years ago I was in a Salt Lake hospital emergency room with my sons and a neighbor boy—the result of a backyard touch football game.

While we waited in the emergency room for the doctor to put one of the participants back together, we saw a young lady brought into the hospital. She may have been seventeen—tall, willowy, well dressed, and having a wild reaction to an overdose of drugs. As we watched, she collapsed, and I thought, There is no way this child can survive this experience. I wondered how she had come to this sad situation in her life.

Had she not heard the words of the prophets? Had she heard them and laughed as if they were the warnings of men out of touch with the realities of a modern world? Had one of us been negligent in our opportunities to teach her? Had her parents known the truth but not been willing or able to help her understand?

While waiting in that hospital thinking, pondering, and praying for her, I recalled a principle the Lord teaches us in the 89th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. It is found in the fourth verse:

“Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and

designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation."

Consider carefully the principle: "I have warned you, and forewarn you, . . . by revelation."

How do we respond to prophets?

We in this church stand before the world, in all humility and sincerity, and declare that Joseph Smith Jr. was raised up by the Lord Jesus Christ and appointed to be the mortal instrument through which the doctrines, powers, keys, priesthood, and ordinances were restored to the earth. Since that day there has been a continual flow of revelation through those who have followed as the Lord's appointed apostles and prophets.

Yesterday we sustained Howard W. Hunter as the President of the Church and as the prophet, seer, and revelator. I wonder if we have any concept of the importance of that event. It is worth some pondering and some praying. But let me point out that President Hunter has sat as one of those men who hold this sacred revelatory power for thirty-five years. He whom the Lord has called and we have sustained is not a novice in the principles, process, and practice of receiving divine direction.

There is a question that each of us must deal with in a most solemn and serious way if our lives are to be what the Father of us all would have them be: "What is our response when the living prophets declare the mind and the will of the Lord?" This is the test of mankind in every dispensation.

The prophets will not lead us astray

I sat in this tabernacle some years ago as President Joseph Fielding Smith stood at this pulpit. It was the general

priesthood meeting of April 1972, the last general conference before President Smith passed away. He said: "There is one thing which we should have exceedingly clear in our minds. Neither the President of the Church, nor the First Presidency, nor the united voice of the First Presidency and the Twelve will ever lead the Saints astray or send forth counsel to the world that is contrary to the mind and will of the Lord."¹

There came to me that evening a witness of the Spirit that he spoke the truth. I felt an overwhelming sense of peace and assurance that the Lord loved us and would not leave us without direction.

President J. Reuben Clark Jr. drew a very important distinction concerning revelation from the Lord:

"Some of the General Authorities have had assigned to them a special calling; they possess a special gift; they are sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators, which gives them a special spiritual endowment in connection with their teaching of the people. They have the right, the power, and authority to declare the mind and will of God to his people, subject to the over-all power and authority of the President of the Church."

President Clark continues: "Others of the General Authorities are not given this special spiritual endowment and authority covering their teaching; they have a resulting limitation, and the resulting limitation upon their power and authority in teaching applies to every other officer and member of the Church, for none of them is spiritually endowed as a prophet, seer, and revelator."²

I emphasize that the rest of us do not have that specific power and authority. The Seventy have an endowment that is uniquely theirs; temple presidents and matrons, stake presidents and bishops, as well as fathers and mothers have an endowment that is uniquely theirs; but none of us has the power, authority,

or responsibility that is given to the First Presidency and the Twelve.

Only the prophets declare doctrine

You may wonder why I stress this point so strongly. It is because a misunderstanding here can cause us deep pain and can be the means of misleading many others. Those who claim similar powers often declare that they are doing it with purity of heart and with total sincerity.

One's intentions may be of the purest kind. The sincerity may be total and complete. Nevertheless, pure intentions and heartfelt sincerity do not give members of the Church authority to declare doctrine which is not sustained by the living prophets. While we are members of the Church, we are not authorized to *publicly declare* our speculations as doctrine nor to extend doctrinal positions to other conclusions based upon the reasoning of men and women, even by the brightest and most well-read among us.

The prophets are called not only to receive the doctrine and direct the ordinances through the keys they hold. They are also responsible to keep the saving doctrine pure so that people can hear and feel that doctrine in its sure and certain form.

Criticizing prophets leads to apostasy

Occasionally we have those who become a law unto themselves in these matters. Sadly, their pride leads them down a road which President Spencer W. Kimball warned us about:

"Apostasy usually begins with question and doubt and criticism. . . .

"They who garnish the sepulchres of the dead prophets begin now by stoning the living ones. They return to the pronouncements of the dead leaders and interpret them to be incompatible with present programs. They convince themselves that there are discrepancies between the practices of the deceased

and the leaders of the present. . . . They allege love for the gospel and the Church but charge that leaders are a little 'off the beam'! . . . Next they say that while the gospel and the Church are divine, the leaders are fallen. Up to this time it may be a passive thing, but now it becomes an active resistance, and frequently the blooming apostate begins to air his views and to crusade. . . . He now begins to expect persecution and adopts a martyr complex, and when finally excommunication comes he associates himself with other apostates to develop and strengthen cults. At this stage he is likely to claim revelation for himself, revelations from the Lord directing him in his interpretations and his actions. These manifestations are superior to anything from living leaders, he claims."³

Almost without exception, as one finds himself or herself walking the road President Kimball just outlined, there will be priesthood leaders who will counsel and advise and even admonish the person. Many heed the counsel, but some do not.

Counseling comes not just for our own benefit but for the blessing of those who might be misled by something we might say or do. I have been deeply grateful to my brethren that they have cared enough to speak to me, on occasion, in plain words.

How to become receptive to counsel

Surrounded as we are by worldly influences, how can we maintain a sweetness of spirit and a humility that will make us receptive to such counsel? I fear that we have become so enamored with recreation, with fame and fortune, with videos, with television, and with what money can buy that we have little time for eternal things. We cannot take the time to obtain a knowledge of the doctrines of eternity, for that requires sacrifice, effort, and struggle. Furthermore, we have learned to live in a world

of clamor and noise and haste and hurry to the extent that we have often become immune to the Spirit of the Lord and the "peaceable things of the kingdom."⁴

How do we prepare ourselves to be in harmony with the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve?

On one occasion during the Savior's mortal ministry, he was challenged by those who were opposing him. They wondered how a person could speak with such certainty without the education of the world.

"Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

"If any man will *do* his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."⁵

We must learn the will of our Father in Heaven by earnest study. Next, we must act upon it. Study alone is not sufficient; we must act upon the words of revelation before we know of a surety of the truthfulness of the doctrines. On the day the Church was organized in 1830, the Lord gave a wonderful promise to those *who labor in the vineyard*:

"For, behold, I will bless all those *who labor in my vineyard* with a mighty blessing, and *they shall believe on his [Joseph Smith's] words*, which are given him through me by the Comforter, which manifesteth that Jesus was crucified by sinful men for the sins of the world, yea, for the remission of sins unto the contrite heart."⁶

If we will follow, with diligence, the counsel and instruction that is the united voice of these Brethren, we will know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether they speak of themselves.

We need listening ears, not greater prophets

In all solemnity and soberness—with a clear understanding of the consequences of a testimony borne in this setting—may I state that God has made known to me in an unmistakable way

that he has called and he sustains those who are the living prophets, seers, and revelators. The Lord God of Israel will direct them, and they will not lead us astray. When you see any document, any address, any letter, any instruction that is issued by the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, it should be recognized for what it surely is—the mind and the will of the Lord to his people in this day.

We do not need greater prophets. We need listening ears. We need hearts that are sufficiently pure that we can *feel* their words. We need souls that will commit to the keeping of our covenants.

My prayer is that each of us may have that watershed experience of life of having the Spirit carry with power—even fire—to our souls the assurance that we are being directed by His appointed servants. I pray that there will enter our hearts the peace that comes from knowing by a power beyond all human ability to transmit that God is aware of us and has raised up servants in our day to lead us under the power and inspiration of his close attention.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1972, p. 99; or *Ensign*, July 1972, p. 88.
2. "When Are Church Leaders' Words Entitled to Claim of Scripture?" *Church News*, 31 July 1954, pp. 9-10
3. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), p. 462.
4. D&C 36:2.
5. John 7:16-17; italics added.
6. D&C 21:9; italics added.

President Hinckley

Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Three weeks ago I was assigned to host an open house at the Orlando Florida Temple for leaders representing the clergy, press, government, education, and business. Before I escorted these prominent guests through the temple, I explained to them the position and basic doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I wanted them to know why the gospel of Jesus Christ was restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith, so they could understand the divine purpose and the eternal significance of the temple. My message this morning is to remind Church members of what we have and to invite nonmembers to understand the need for the restoration of the gospel.

The Savior's ministry and church

The mortal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ was comparatively brief. He lived only thirty-three years, and His ministry was only three years. But in those three years He taught the human family everything that is necessary to receive all of the blessings our Father in Heaven has in store for His children. He concluded His mortal ministry with the single most compassionate and significant service in the history of the world: the Atonement.

One of the most important accomplishments of the Savior was the establishment of His church upon the earth. Paul taught that Christ "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12).

When Jesus called His twelve Apostles, He laid His hands upon them, ordained them, and conferred upon them the authority to act in His name and

govern His church. Peter is commonly understood to have become the chief Apostle, or the President of the Church, after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

The Apostasy

Early Christians endured the challenges of persecution and hardship. Peter and his brethren had a difficult time holding the Church together and keeping the doctrine pure. They traveled extensively and wrote to one another about the problems they were facing, but information moved so slowly and the Church and its teachings were so new that heading off false teachings before they became firmly entrenched was difficult.

The New Testament indicates that the early Apostles worked hard to preserve the church that Jesus Christ left to their care and keeping, but they knew their efforts would ultimately be in vain. Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Saints, who were anxiously anticipating the second coming of Christ, that "that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). He also warned Timothy that "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; . . . And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

And Peter presupposed the falling away, or the Apostasy, when he spoke of "the times of refreshing" that would come before God would again send Jesus Christ, who "before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21).

Eventually, with the known exception of John the Beloved, Peter and his

fellow Apostles were martyred. The Apostle John and members of the Church struggled for survival in the face of horrifying oppression. To their everlasting credit, Christianity did survive and was truly a prominent force by the end of the second century A.D. Many valiant Saints were instrumental in helping Christianity to endure.

Despite the significance of the ministries of these Saints, they did not hold the same apostolic authority that Peter and the other Apostles had received through ordination under the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. When that authority was lost, men began looking to other sources for doctrinal understanding. As a result, many plain and precious truths were lost.

Corruption of the Savior's doctrine

History tells us, for example, of a great council held in A.D. 325 in Nicaea. By this time Christianity had emerged from the dank dungeons of Rome to become the state religion of the Roman Empire, but the church still had problems—chiefly the inability of Christians to agree among themselves on basic points of doctrine. To resolve differences, Emperor Constantine called together a group of Christian bishops to establish once and for all the official doctrines of the church.

Consensus did not come easily. Opinions on such basic subjects as the nature of God were diverse and deeply felt, and debate was spirited. Decisions were not made by inspiration or revelation but by majority vote, and some disagreeing factions split off and formed new churches. Similar doctrinal councils were held later in A.D. 451, 787, and 1545 with similarly divisive results.

The beautiful simplicity of Christ's gospel was under attack from an enemy that was even more destructive than the scourges and the crosses of early Rome: the philosophical meanderings of un-

inspired men. The doctrine became based more on popular opinion than on revelation. This period of time was called the Dark Ages. They were dark largely because the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ had been lost.

The Reformation

Then in 1517 the Spirit moved Martin Luther, a German priest who was disturbed at how far the church had strayed from the gospel as taught by Christ. His work led to a reformation, a movement that was taken up by such other visionaries as John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli, John Wesley, and John Smith.

I believe these reformers were inspired to create a religious climate in which God could restore lost truths and priesthood authority. Similarly, God inspired the earlier explorers and colonizers of America and the framers of the Constitution of the United States to develop a land and governing principles to which the gospel could be restored.

Joseph Smith searches for truth

By 1820 the world was ready for the "restitution of all things" spoken of by Peter and "all [God's] holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

At this time religious excitement was sweeping across the countryside in upstate New York. Ministers from different denominations vied zealously for the loyalty of the faithful in villages and towns, including Palmyra, the home of the family of Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith.

The Smith family followed this religious excitement, and members of the family were "proselyted" to various faiths. Mother Smith and three of the children—Hyrum, Samuel, and Sophronia—joined one church (see Joseph Smith—History 1:7), while Father Smith and his eldest son, Alvin, affiliated with another.

When fourteen-year-old Joseph Jr. considered which church to join, he investigated each denomination carefully, listening to the respective ministers and trying to sort out the truth. He knew there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5), but which was the one he did not know.

"In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions," Joseph Smith Jr. wrote later, "I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?" (Joseph Smith—History 1:10.)

Young Joseph looked for answers to his questions in the scriptures. While reading in the Bible, he came upon a simple, direct admonition in the epistle of James: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

Joseph reflected: "Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did; for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know" (Joseph Smith—History 1:12).

The First Vision

With the simple faith of youth and motivated by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Joseph decided to go into a grove of trees near his home and put the promise in James to the test.

On a beautiful, clear spring morning, Joseph retired to the woods. He paused when he arrived at a quiet, secluded spot. He looked around to make sure he was alone. Then he knelt and began to pray. No sooner had he done so than an overwhelming feeling of

darkness swept over him, as if some evil power was trying to dissuade him. Rather than surrender, Joseph intensified his pleas to God—and God Himself responded.

Reading from Joseph's account:

"I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. . . .

"When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17).

I testify that those Beings were God, our Heavenly Father, and His resurrected Son, Jesus Christ, in one of the most supernal spiritual manifestations of all time!

They told Joseph he should join none of the existing churches.

Their mission accomplished, the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, departed, leaving young Joseph physically drained but spiritually enriched with exciting restored truth. He knew with certainty that God, our Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, are real, for he had seen them. He knew they are two separate, distinct individuals. He knew that no church on the face of the earth had the authority of the priesthood to act in the name of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the most important lesson young Joseph learned in the Sacred Grove is this significant eternal truth: the heavens are *not* sealed. God does communicate with mortals. He loves us today just as much as He loved those who lived anciently. What comfort that sweet assurance provides in a world filled with confusion and discouragement! What *peace* and *security* come to the heart that understands that God in

heaven knows us and cares about us, individually and collectively, and that He communicates with us, either directly or through His living prophets, according to our needs.

The Restoration

My dear friends, I testify to you that this is true and that the Father and the Son appeared in wondrous vision to young Joseph as a step in the restoring of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the earth. Through subsequent, equally miraculous experiences, Joseph Smith was God's instrument in—

- Translating from ancient records a book of scripture, the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.

- Restoring priesthood authority.

- Restoring sealing keys to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers.

- Establishing the restored church of Jesus Christ in these latter days with the fulness of the gospel as taught in the meridian of time by the Savior and His Apostles.

- Fulfilling biblical prophecy.

- Preparing for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

During the Orlando temple tours I explained to our guests who were not of our faith that I understood if they found this message a bit overwhelming. I taught my new friends in Orlando, as I teach here this morning, that either the gospel has been restored, or it has not. Either the Savior's original church and its doctrine were lost, or they were not. Either Joseph Smith had that remarkable vision, or he did not. The Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ, or it is not. Either the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ was restored to earth through God's chosen latter-day prophet, or it was not.

The truth really is not any more complicated than that. Either these things happened just as I have testified,

or they did not. As a latter-day Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, my testimony, and the testimony of millions of faithful members of the Church the world over, is that what I have told you this morning is true. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been restored to the earth through Joseph Smith and is administered today by a living prophet. These things I know!

A certain way to know the truth

This information is valuable to each of us only if we know for ourselves that it is true. Thankfully we have a simple but certain way to know. It requires some effort and sincere prayer. But it is worth it!

In the last chapter of the Book of Mormon, an ancient prophet named Moroni gave a significant promise to those who would one day read this sacred book of scripture. His promise applies to every sincere seeker of truth. He wrote:

"And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

"And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:4-5).

Moroni urges us to go directly to the Source of Truth for answers to our questions. If we seek Him humbly and sincerely, He will help us discern truth from error. As the Savior Himself assured His disciples, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Brothers and sisters, we know the truth. Because we do, we are expected to share it with all of our Heavenly Father's

children. To our dear friends of the Church, please do not let pass this opportunity to receive personal revelation from God. Consider what I have said. Weigh it carefully. Measure it against the things you believe. Hold fast to all that is true, and add to that the fulness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Take into account what you have felt as you have listened. You can know if these things are true by asking God. Listen for His answer; then respond to what you feel.

If you will do so, I believe you will come to know as I know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God's true church upon the earth. May God bless you, my dear friends, with the peace and joy the gospel gives, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Come, We That Love the Lord."

President Hinckley

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung "Come, We That Love the Lord."

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker, after which the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

President Thomas S. Monson

Widows in Berlin

Many years ago I attended a large gathering of Church members in the city of Berlin, Germany. A spirit of quiet reverence permeated the gathering as an organ prelude of hymns was played. I gazed at those who sat before me. There were mothers and fathers and relatively few children. The majority of those who sat on crowded benches were women about middle age—and alone. Suddenly it dawned on me that perhaps these were widows, having lost their husbands during World War II. My curiosity demanded an answer to my unexpressed thought, so I asked the conducting officer to take a sort of standing roll call. When he asked all those who were widows to please arise, it seemed that half the vast throng stood. Their faces reflected the grim effect of war's cruelty. Their hopes had been shattered, their lives altered, and their future had in a way been taken from

them. Behind each countenance was a personal travail of tears. I addressed my remarks to them and to all who have loved, then lost, those most dear.

Faith and sacrifices of a German widow

Frederick W. Babbel, who accompanied Elder Ezra Taft Benson on his postwar visit to Europe to assist the struggling Saints, recounts in his book *On Wings of Faith* one heartrending account. A woman, even the mother of four small children, had been newly widowed. Her husband, young and handsome, whom she loved more than life itself, had been killed during the final days of the frightful battles in their homeland of East Prussia. She and her children were forced to flee to West Germany, a distance of a thousand miles. The weather was mild as they began their long and difficult trek on foot. Constantly being faced with dangers from panicky refugees and marauding

troops was difficult enough, but then came the cold of winter, with its accompanying snow and ice. Her resources were meager; now they were gone. All she had was her strong faith in God and in the gospel as revealed to the latter-day prophet Joseph Smith.

And then one morning the unthinkable happened. She awakened with a chill in her heart. The tiny form of her three-year-old daughter was cold and still, and she realized that death had claimed her. With great effort the mother prepared a shallow grave and buried her precious child.

Death, however, was to be her companion again and again on the journey. Her seven-year-old perished, and then her five-year-old. Her despair was all-consuming. Finally, as she was reaching the end of her travel, the baby died in her arms. She had lost her husband and all her children. She had given up all her earthly goods, her home, and even her homeland.

From the depths of her despair, she knelt and prayed more fervently than she had ever prayed in her life: "Dear Heavenly Father, I do not know how I can go on. I have nothing left—except my faith in thee. I feel amidst the desolation of my soul an overwhelming gratitude for the atoning sacrifice of thy Son, Jesus Christ. I know that because he suffered and died, I shall live again with my family; that because he broke the chains of death, I shall see my children again in the flesh and will have the joy of raising them. Though I do not at this moment wish to live, I will do so, that we may be reunited as a family and return, together, to thee." This prayer, this testimony sustained her until finally she reached Karlsruhe, her destination.

"Where can I turn for peace?"

Though perhaps not so cruel and dramatic, yet equally poignant, are the lives described in the obituaries of our

day and time when the uninvited enemy called death enters the stage of our mortal existence and snatches from our grasp a loving husband or precious wife and, frequently in the young exuberance of life, our children and grandchildren. Death shows no mercy. Death is no respecter of persons, but in its insidious way it visits all. At times it is after long-suffering and is a blessing, while in other instances those in the prime of life are taken by its grasp.

As of old, the heartbroken frequently and silently repeat the ancient question: "Is there no balm in Gilead?"¹ "Why me; why now?" The words of a beautiful hymn provide a partial answer:

Where can I turn for peace? Where
is my solace
When other sources cease to make
me whole?
When with a wounded heart, anger,
or malice,
I draw myself apart, Searching my
soul? . . .

He answers privately, Reaches my
reaching
In my Gethsemane, Savior and
Friend.
Gentle the peace he finds for my be-
seaching.
Constant he is and kind, Love with-
out end.²

Widows in the scriptures

The plight of the widow is a recurring theme through holy writ. Our hearts go out to the widow at Zarephath. Gone was her husband. Consumed was her scant supply of food. Starvation and death awaited. But then came God's prophet with the seemingly brazen command that the widow woman should feed him. Her response is particularly touching: "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I

am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die."³

The reassuring words of Elijah penetrated her very being:

"Fear not; go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

"For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail. . .

"And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah. . .

"And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail."⁴

Like the widow at Zarephath was the widow of Nain. The New Testament of our Lord records a moving and soul-stirring account of the Master's tender regard for the grieving widow:

"And it came to pass . . . that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

"Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

"And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

"And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

"And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother."⁵

Care for widows and orphans

What power, what tenderness, what compassion did our Master and Exemplar demonstrate. We too can bless if we will but follow his noble example. Opportunities are everywhere. Needed are eyes to see the pitiable plight, ears to hear the silent pleadings of a broken

heart, yes, and a soul filled with compassion, that we might communicate not only eye to eye or voice to ear but in the majestic style of the Savior, even heart to heart.

The word *widow* appears to have had a most significant meaning to our Lord. He cautioned his disciples to beware the example of the scribes, who feigned righteousness by their long apparel and their lengthy prayers, but who devoured the houses of widows.⁶

To the Nephites came the direct warning, "I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against . . . those that oppress . . . the widow."⁷

And to the Prophet Joseph Smith he directed, "The storehouse shall be kept by the consecrations of the church; and widows and orphans shall be provided for, as also the poor."⁸

The widow's home is generally not large or ornate. Frequently it is a modest one in size and humble in appearance. Often it is tucked away at the top of the stairs or the back of the hallway and consists of but one room. To such homes he sends you and me.

There may exist an actual need for food, clothing, even shelter. Such can be supplied. Almost always there remains the hope for that special hyacinth to feed the soul.

Go, gladden the lonely, the dreary;
Go, comfort the weeping, the weary;
Go, scatter kind deeds on your way;
Oh, make the world brighter today!⁹

Let us remember that after the funeral flowers fade, the well-wishes of friends become memories, and the prayers offered and words spoken dim in the corridors of the mind. Those who grieve frequently find themselves alone. Missed is the laughter of children, the commotion of teenagers, and the tender, loving concern of a departed companion. The clock ticks more loudly, time

passes more slowly, and four walls do indeed a prison make.

Hopefully all of us may again hear the echo of words spoken by the Master, inspiring us to good deeds: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these . . . , ye have done it unto me."¹⁰

The late Elder Richard L. Evans left for our contemplation and action this admonition:

"We who are [young] should never become so blindly absorbed in our own pursuits as to forget that there are still with us those who will live in loneliness unless we let them share our lives as once they let us share theirs. . . .

"We cannot bring them back the morning hours of youth. But we can help them live in the warm glow of a sunset made more beautiful by our thoughtfulness, by our provision, and by our active and unfeigned love. Life in its fullness is a loving ministry of service from generation to generation. God grant that those who belong to us may never be left in loneliness."¹¹

A semitrailer filled with fresh fruit

Long years ago a severe drought struck the Salt Lake Valley. The commodities at the storehouse on Welfare Square had not been of their usual quality, nor were they found in abundance. Many products were missing, especially fresh fruit. As I was a young bishop, worrying about the needs of the many widows in my ward, my prayer one evening is especially sacred to me. I pleaded for these widows, who were among the finest women I knew in mortality and whose needs were simple and conservative, because they had no resources on which they might rely.

The next morning I received a call from a ward member, a proprietor of a produce business situated in our ward. "Bishop," he said, "I would like to send a semitrailer filled with oranges, grapefruit, and bananas to the bishops' store-

house to be given to those in need. Could you make arrangements?" Could I make arrangements! The storehouse was alerted, and then each bishop was telephoned and the entire shipment distributed. Bishop Jesse M. Drury, that beloved welfare pioneer and storekeeper, said he had never witnessed a day like it before. He described the occasion with one word: "Wonderful!"

The wife of that generous businessman is today a widow. I know the decision her husband and she made has brought her sweet memories and comforting peace to her soul.

Gratitude to those who care for widows

I express my sincere appreciation to one and all who are mindful of the widow. To the thoughtful neighbors who invite a widow to dinner and to that royal army of noble women, the visiting teachers of the Relief Society, I add, may God bless you for your kindness and your love unfeigned toward her who reaches out and touches vanished hands and listens to voices forever stilled. The words of the Prophet Joseph Smith describe their mission: "I attended by request, the Female Relief Society, whose object is the relief of the poor, the destitute, the widow and the orphan, and for the exercise of all benevolent purposes."¹²

Thank you to thoughtful and caring bishops who ensure that no widow's cupboard is empty, no house unwarmed, no life unblessed. I admire the ward leaders who invite the widows to all social activities, often providing a young Aaronic Priesthood lad to be a special escort for the occasion.

A widow contributes to the missionary fund

Frequently the need of the widow is not one of food or shelter but of feeling a part of ongoing events. President

Bryan Richards of Salt Lake City, now serving as a mission president, brought to my office a sweet widow whose husband had passed away during a full-time mission they were serving. President Richards explained that her financial resources were adequate and that she desired to contribute to the Church's General Missionary Fund the proceeds of two insurance policies on the life of her departed husband. I could not restrain my tears when she meekly advised me, "This is what I wish to do. It is what my missionary-minded husband would like."

The gift was received and entered as a most substantial donation to missionary service. I saw the receipt made in her name, but I believe in my heart it was also recorded in heaven. I invited her and President Richards to follow me to the unoccupied First Presidency Council room in the Church Administration Building. The room is beautiful and peaceful. I asked this sweet widow to sit in the chair usually occupied by our church President. I felt he would not mind, for I knew his heart. As she sat ever so humbly in the large leather chair, she gripped each armrest with a hand and declared, "This is one of the happiest days of my life." It was also such for President Richards and for me.

Children caring for widowed parents

I never travel to work along busy Seventh East in Salt Lake City but what I see in my mind's eye a thoughtful daughter, afflicted with arthritis and carrying in her hand a plate of warm food to her aged mother, who lived across the busy thoroughfare. She has now gone home to that mother who preceded her in passing. But her lesson was not lost on her daughters, who delight their widowed father by cleaning his house each week, inviting him to dinners in their homes, and sharing with him the laughter of good times together, leaving

in that widower's heart a prayer of gratitude for his daughters, the light of his life. Fathers experience loneliness as well as mothers.

Nell at Maytime Manor

One evening at Christmastime my wife and I visited a nursing home in Salt Lake City. We looked in vain for a ninety-five-year-old widow whose memory had become clouded and who could not speak a word. An attendant led us in our search, and we found Nell in the dining room. She had eaten her meal; she was sitting silently, staring into space. She did not show us any sign of recognition. As I reached to take her hand, she withdrew it. I noticed that she held firmly to a Christmas greeting card. The attendant smiled and said, "I don't know who sent that card, but she will not lay it aside. She doesn't speak, but pats the card and holds it to her lips and kisses it." I recognized the card. It was one my wife, Frances, had sent to Nell the week before. We left Maytime Manor more filled with the Christmas spirit than when we entered. We kept to ourselves the mystery of that special card and the life it had gladdened and the heart it had touched. Heaven was nearby.

Pure religion and undefiled before God

We need not wait for Christmas; we need not postpone till Thanksgiving Day our response to the Savior's tender admonition, "Go, and do thou likewise."¹³

As we follow in his footsteps, as we ponder his thoughts and his deeds, as we keep his commandments, we will be blessed. The grieving widow, the fatherless child, and the lonely of heart everywhere will be gladdened, comforted, and sustained through our service, and we will experience a deeper understanding of the words recorded in the Epistle of James: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To

visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."¹⁴

May the peace promised by the Savior be the gift of one and all this Sabbath day and always is my fervent and humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Jeremiah 8:22.
2. "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" *Hymns*, no. 129.
3. 1 Kings 17:12.
4. 1 Kings 17:13-16.
5. Luke 7:11-15.
6. See Luke 20:46-47.
7. 3 Nephi 24:5.
8. D&C 83:6.
9. *Deseret Sunday School Songs* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1909), no. 197.
10. Matthew 25:40.
11. Richard L. Evans, *Thoughts for One Hundred Days* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1966), p. 222.
12. *History of the Church*, 4:567.
13. Luke 10:37.
14. James 1:27.

The choir sang "Sweet Is the Peace the Gospel Brings."

Elder Neil L. Andersen offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 164th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 2, 1994. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

President Howard W. Hunter, who presides at this conference, has asked me, Brother Monson, to conduct this session.

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 164th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We note that Elders Jeffrey R. Holland, Ronald E. Poelman, and Durrel A. Woolsey are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall; and Elders Loren C. Dunn and Ben B. Banks are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

We send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and to many friends everywhere, who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and accompanied by Richard Elliott, will provide the music for this session. The choir will begin this service by singing "In Hymns of Praise." The invocation will then be offered by Elder James M. Paramore of the Seventy.

The choir sang "In Hymns of Praise."

Elder James M. Paramore offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you, Brother Paramore.

The choir will now sing "Dedication." Elder James E. Faust of the Council of Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Dedication."

Elder James E. Faust

The keys that never rust

A few months ago my beloved Ruth, Elder Holland and his sweet Patty, and I accompanied a group into the fascinating old city of Jerusalem to look for the door with the name of Hyde carved on it. The enchanting smells of the open containers of spices and the sounds of men selling their wares were exhilarating. As we entered St. Saviour's Monastery, looking for the door, we entered into old passageways surrounded by stone walls. We were told that some parts of the walls went back to the time of the Crusaders. On one wall hung an assortment of ancient rusted keys. Some of these keys were huge. All were larger than the keys we use today. Many of them were very ornate. Many of the doors the keys were made to open no longer exist, or if they do, the keys and the locks would be too rusty to open them.

Today I speak of keys other than those of metal. The keys I speak of never rust. These are the keys of life and salvation in the kingdom of God. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "I will give you a key that will never rust, if you will stay with the majority of the Twelve Apostles, and the records of the Church, you will never be led astray."¹

The Prophet also stated: "The Priesthood is everlasting. The Savior, Moses, and Elias, gave the keys to Peter, James, and John, on the mount, when they were transfigured before him."² Peter, James, and John conferred the keys of the kingdom of God upon the Prophet Joseph and ordained him to be an Apostle and a special witness of the name of the Savior and to bear the keys of his ministry.³ Keys that pertain to the gathering of Israel, the dispensation of Abraham, and, indispensably, the sealing power were conferred upon the Prophet by Moses, Elias, and Elijah in 1836.⁴

Joseph Smith gave keys to the Twelve

Prior to the martyrdom, no doubt with a sense of foreboding, the Prophet Joseph prepared for his death. President Joseph Fielding Smith states:

"The Prophet declared that he knew not why, but the Lord commanded him to endow the Twelve with these keys and priesthood, and after it was done, he rejoiced very much, saying in substance, 'Now, if they kill me, you have all the keys and all the ordinances and you can confer them upon others, and the powers of Satan will not be able to tear down the kingdom as fast as you will be able to build it up, and upon your shoulders will the responsibility of leading this people rest.'"⁵

After learning of the deaths of the Prophet Joseph and the Patriarch Hyrum, Wilford Woodruff reports his meeting with Brigham Young, who was then the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as follows: "I met Brigham Young in the streets of Boston, he having just returned, opposite to Sister Voce's house. We reached out our hands, but neither of us was able to speak a word. . . . After we had done weeping we began to converse. . . . In the course of the conversation, he [Brigham Young] smote his hand upon his thigh and said, 'Thank God, the keys of the kingdom are here.'"⁶

Choosing the successor to the President

When Brigham Young returned to Nauvoo, Sidney Rigdon, who had been a Counselor to Joseph Smith, challenged the leadership of Brigham Young and the Apostles. Said Brigham Young to the Saints in meeting assembled, "If the people want President Rigdon to lead them they may have him; but I say unto you that the Quorum of the Twelve have the keys of the kingdom of God in all the

world." He continued: "I know where the keys of the kingdom are, and where they will eternally be. You cannot call a man to be a prophet; you cannot take Elder Rigdon and place him above the Twelve; if so, he must be ordained by them."⁷

Brigham Young, as the President of the Quorum of the Twelve, subsequently became the President of the Church, following the Prophet Joseph Smith. So it was with President Howard W. Hunter following the death of President Ezra Taft Benson. As President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

"There is no mystery about the choosing of the successor to the President of the Church. The Lord settled this a long time ago, and the *senior apostle automatically becomes the presiding officer of the Church*, and he is so sustained by the Council of the Twelve which becomes the presiding body of the Church when there is no First Presidency. The president is *not elected*, but he has to be *sustained* both by his brethren of the Council and by the members of the Church."⁸

Howard W. Hunter becomes President

On June 5, 1994, the Quorum of the Twelve, of which President Hunter was then President, collectively holding all of the keys of the kingdom, convened in the Salt Lake Temple. President Howard W. Hunter was then ordained and set apart by the Twelve, with President Gordon B. Hinckley as voice for the Twelve. President Hunter thus became the President and legal administrator of the Church and the only man authorized to dispense, oversee, and exercise all of the keys of the kingdom of God on earth. He also became the successor to the keys held by Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith, Heber J. Grant, George Albert Smith, David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, Spencer W. Kimball, and Ezra Taft Benson.

The keys given by the Savior to Peter, James, and John, and given by them to the Prophet Joseph, have not rusted. They will open all spiritual doors of the dispensation of the fulness of times. They are now exercised by President Howard W. Hunter, his Counselors in the First Presidency, and the Quorum of the Twelve, who serve under the direction of the First Presidency.

Keys to remain until the Second Coming

How long will these keys last? President Wilford Woodruff stated:

"When the Lord gave the keys of the kingdom of God, the keys of the Melchisedec Priesthood, of the apostleship, and sealed them upon the head of Joseph Smith, He sealed them upon his head to stay here upon the earth until the coming of the Son of Man. . . . They were with him to the day of his death. They then rested upon the head of another man. . . . He held those keys to the hour of his death. They then fell by turn, or in the providence of God, upon Wilford Woodruff.

"I say to the Latter-day Saints the keys of the kingdom of God are here, and they are going to stay here, too, until the coming of the Son of Man. Let all Israel understand that. They may not rest upon my head but a short time, but they will then rest on the head of another apostle, and another after him, and so continue until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven to 'reward every man according to the deeds done in the body.'"⁹

There is only one head of this church, and he is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the head of all. Under him stands President Howard W. Hunter, the man whom the Lord has selected to stand at the head of the Church, with his Counselors in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. All other organizations in the Church are subordinate to those who have these keys.

Importance of spiritual keys

Why are these spiritual keys so important? These spiritual keys hold "the right to enjoy the blessing of communication with the heavens, and the privilege and authority to administer in the ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to preach the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins."¹⁰ Keys of the ministering of angels are the right of the Aaronic Priesthood.¹¹ The higher Melchizedek Priesthood "holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God."¹² To be efficacious and valid, every act in the Church must be performed under the authority of the keys at the appropriate time and place and in the proper manner and order. The authority and power to direct all of the labors of the kingdom of God on earth constitute the keys of the priesthood. Those who possess them have the right to preside over and direct the affairs of the Church in their jurisdiction.

Why is it so necessary to follow those who have the keys of the priesthood? That principle has guided this church and its people since the beginning, and it is a principle of revelation. Among the members of the Church have been the living oracles of God, who have held the keys to direct this holy work. Without prophets, seers, and revelators, the Church and the kingdom of God cannot grow and prosper.

Story of the Vaudois

Valdesius, a citizen of Lyons, France, recognized the need for apostolic direction in the year 1170. A rich man, he abandoned his wealth so that he could live the simple life of a follower of Christ's Apostles. He worked primarily among the poor in and around Lyons and had parts of the Bible translated into their language. He and his followers traveled two by two, teaching the simple

truths of the Bible. Some crossed the high mountains of the Alps to live in the Piedmont Valleys of Italy.¹³

This valiant band, who came to be known as Valdensians or Vaudois, were viewed by their contemporaries as dangerous dissenters. Over the centuries they were "burned at the stake, buried alive, stoned, . . . hanged, herded into . . . disease-laden dungeons, [and] pursued . . . over rocks and crags and icy mountains."¹⁴ Yet they clung on tenaciously, turning back whole armies of tyrants to preserve their precious heritage of faith in the early Apostles, who held the keys that never rust.

In 1655 their overlord, the Duke of Savoy, issued an edict that they were to renounce or be massacred. The ensuing slaughter at last awakened the conscience of some of their neighbors, one of whom was John Milton, the great English poet. Repulsed by this evil deed, he penned his sonnet "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont":

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered
Saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine moun-
tains cold.¹⁵

In 1850, Elder Lorenzo Snow of the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ascended a very high mountain near LaTour to visit the Vaudois of the Piedmont. He and his two companions stood on a bold projecting rock, where he proclaimed that Joseph Smith had seen the Father and the Son and had restored the gospel in its fulness and completeness. He testified that the keys of the holy apostleship had been restored. He further testified that there were indeed living Apostles and prophets upon the earth. Many believed his startling message and joined the Church. Moved by his experience with the Vaudois living in the Alpine mountain valleys, President Snow cited the stirring words:

For the strength of the hills we bless thee,
 Our God, our fathers' God;
 Thou hast made thy children mighty
 By the touch of the mountain sod.¹⁶

John Daniel Malan was the first of the Vaudois to be baptized on October 27, 1850, followed by the families of the Cardons, Stalles, Beuses, Pons, Malans, Gaudins, Chatelains, and many others. Some were in the first handcart companies to come to the Salt Lake Valley in the early 1850s. These families intermarried into other well-known families in the western United States, including the Larsons, Maughans, Crocketts, Miners, Budgees, Thatchers, Steeds, and Parkinsons.¹⁷ Drawing from their roots in the Vaudois mountain sod, many of their descendants tended the vineyards of the newly restored church and today are making singular contributions to the worldwide church, believing, as did their forebears, that Apostles hold the keys that never rust.

Following the prophet brings strength

I strongly counsel all who have membership in this church to follow the teachings and counsel of those who now have the keys as prophets, seers, and revelators. They are the ones who will inspire us to deal with the vicissitudes of our time. I plead with all not to try to selectively invoke gospel principles or scripture to wrongly justify spiritual disobedience or to separate themselves from the responsibilities of covenants and ordinances contrary to the counsel of those who have the prophetic voice in the Church. The scriptures and doctrines of the Church are not, as Peter warned, "of any private interpretation."¹⁸

Great temporal and spiritual strength flows from following those who have the keys of the kingdom of God in our time. Personal strength and power result

from obedience to eternal principles taught by the living legates of the Lord. May the Spirit of God rest upon us as we follow the living oracles.

As we conclude this historic conference, I am pleased to testify to the world of a very significant matter. As a special witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, I verify that among those who hold the keys of the kingdom of God on earth, there is complete unity and love and respect for each other. We totally sustain and uphold President Howard W. Hunter, President Gordon B. Hinckley, and President Thomas S. Monson as the First Presidency. This feeling of complete unity and support for the First Presidency was expressed last Thursday in the Salt Lake Temple in a proclamation by President Boyd K. Packer on behalf of the Twelve. This was joined in by President Rex D. Pinegar, representing the Seventies, and Bishop Merrill J. Bateman for the Presiding Bishopric. All of the General Authorities then voted to fully sustain the expressions of President Packer of full support for the First Presidency and for each other. In this unity, the gates of hell will not prevail against us. I so testify and witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Quoted in "Joseph Smith, the Prophet," *Young Woman's Journal*, Dec. 1906, p. 543; see also Don L. Searle, "A Disciple in Deed," *Ensign*, June 1994, p. 15.
2. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 158; see also Matthew 17:1-3.
3. See D&C 27:12-13.
4. See D&C 110.
5. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56), 1:259.
6. "The Keys of the Kingdom," *Millennial Star*, 2 Sept. 1889, p. 546.

7. *History of the Church*, 7:233.
8. *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:156.
9. *Millennial Star*, 2 Sept. 1889, p. 547.
10. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939), p. 142.
11. See D&C 13; 107:20.
12. D&C 84:19.
13. See Giorgio Tourn, *The Waldensians: The First 800 Years*, trans. Camillo P. Merlino (Torino: Claudiana, 1980), pp. 3-4.
14. Archibald F. Bennett, "The Vaudois Revisited," *Improvement Era*, Jan. 1948, p. 12.
15. Lines 1-2.
16. "For the Strength of the Hills," *Hymns*, no. 35. Original text was a poem titled "Hymn of the Vaudois Mountaineers in Times of Persecution."
17. Archibald F. Bennett, "The Vaudois of the Alpine Valleys and Their Contribution to Utah and Latter-day Saint History" (student paper, Brigham Young University, 1960), pp. 8-9, 16; in Historical Department, *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Salt Lake City.
18. 2 Peter 1:20.

President Monson

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, also a member of the Council of the Twelve. He will be followed by Sister Patricia P. Pinegar, who was sustained yesterday as the new general president of the Primary.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

My dear brothers and sisters, I am grateful for the opportunity to join with you during this general conference in sustaining President Howard W. Hunter as the fourteenth President of the Church in this dispensation. He is a man without guile. I sustain him with all of my heart and pray that I might serve faithfully under his inspired leadership, and also his marvelous Counselors.

Extend deep roots into the gospel soil

Recently on the island of Molokai in the Hawaiian Islands, Sister Wirthlin and I passed by two very large trees that the wind had blown down and uprooted. These huge trees had extremely shallow roots. I wondered if they would have survived the winds and storms if their roots had been deeper. Relatively mild gusts of wind blow some trees down. Graceful palm trees, for example, are lovely to look at but will not stand up in

a heavy wind because they are not well anchored. Contrast this with giant oak trees that have deep root systems that can extend two-and-one-half times their height. Such trees rarely are blown down regardless of how violent the storms may be.

Faithful members of the Church should be like oak trees and should extend deep roots into the fertile soil of the fundamental principles of the gospel. We should understand and live by the simple, basic truths and not complicate them. Our foundations should be solid and deep-rooted so we can withstand the winds of temptation, false doctrine, adversity, and the onslaught of the adversary without being swayed or uprooted. Members whose roots are only at the surface of the gospel need to sink them deeper until they reach the bedrock below the soft topsoil.

Spiritual nourishment is just as important as a balanced diet to keep

us strong and healthy. We nourish ourselves spiritually by partaking of the sacrament weekly, reading the scriptures daily, praying daily in personal and family prayer, and performing temple work regularly. Our spiritual strengths are like batteries; they need to be charged and frequently recharged.

Reality of God the Father

I wish to review with you a few core principles of the gospel into which our spiritual roots should sink deeply. Most important is the reality of our Heavenly Father; his Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost.

Our Heavenly Father is the father of our spirits and of the entire human race; we are his offspring, his sons and daughters. We have inherited divine characteristics from him. Because of his love for his children, he provided a plan for us to progress and reach our highest potential and return to his presence. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself."¹

Reality of Jesus Christ, our Savior

Jesus Christ is infinitely more than a great teacher and philosopher. He is the Firstborn Son of God, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. He accepted the Father's great plan of happiness, saying, "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever."² The Father's plan gave us our agency to choose right or wrong, good or evil so we can learn, develop, and progress. As part of the plan, Jesus offered to atone for the sins of all mankind and bear the suffering for those sins, satisfying the law of justice if the sinners repent. Otherwise they

have to suffer and pay the penalty for their transgressions.

He also offered his mortal life, was crucified, and became the first to be resurrected, making possible the literal resurrection of all of our Father's children. He created this earth under his Father's direction as a place for us to live in mortality and prove whether we would be obedient and "do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God shall command."³ He also created innumerable other worlds. He is our Mediator with the Father and our Exemplar in all things. His loving kindness toward us is beyond our comprehension. He stands at the head of his church, which bears his name, and directs it through his prophets.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Rock of our salvation. He said in the Sermon on the Mount:

"Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell."⁴

To the Saints in this dispensation, he said, "Do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail."⁵

Reality of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead. As the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not

a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit.”⁶ He is a witness and testifier of the truth of the gospel. He is a revelator and teacher who conveys information to our spirits with far more certainty than is possible by our natural senses. He can guide us in every choice and decision and never will deceive or mislead us. He is a comforter who brings peace to our souls in times of need.

Reality of Satan

Just as real is one who would prevent us from becoming rooted to God and his truths. Two of his names are Lucifer and Satan. He is the adversary of our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and of everything that is good. He rejected the Father’s plan in the premortal life, saying, “Send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor.”⁷ The Father then said:

“Because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down;

“And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice.”⁸

From that time forward, Satan has led the forces of evil in a battle for the souls of men in his attempt to frustrate the plan of salvation.

Distinguishing between good and evil

We learn from the Book of Mormon prophet Moroni that “all things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil; for the devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually, and inviteth and en-

ticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually.

“But behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, . . . to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God. . . .

“ . . . The Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; . . . every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; . . .

“But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God . . . is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.”⁹

The sins of corruption, dishonesty, strife, contention, and other evils in this world are not here by chance. They are evidences of the relentless campaign of Satan and those who follow him. He uses every tool and device available to him to deceive, confuse, and mislead. He has many followers who do anything for money without regard for the effects of their misdeeds.

Importance of moral purity

Another core principle is moral purity. One of the most pervasive deceptions in recent years is the notion that immorality is normal and acceptable and has no negative consequences. In truth, immorality is the underlying cause of much suffering and many other problems that are prevalent today, including rampant disease, abortion, broken families, families without fathers, and mothers who themselves are children. President Ezra Taft Benson said, “The plaguing sin of this generation is sexual immorality.”¹⁰ The Lord said, “Thou shalt not . . . commit adultery, . . . nor do anything like unto it.”¹¹ That means we are to avoid abnormal sexual

behavior, including fornication, homosexual behavior, child molestation, or any other perversion of God's plan of happiness.

The Word of Wisdom

A gospel principle that provides spiritual and physical strength is the Word of Wisdom. For many years after the Prophet Joseph Smith received this revelation in 1833, people deceived themselves into believing they could ignore or violate this law of health with impunity. I believe the Lord inspired President Heber J. Grant to emphasize it frequently and forcefully to counter the media that was becoming increasingly sophisticated and persuasive during his time. Today medical science has proven that tobacco and other such addictive substances are poisons that are harmful to the human body.

Missionary service

We can reach out to others in missionary service in response to the Savior's injunction to "go . . . into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."¹² The Lord used a harvest analogy when he instructed the early Saints to proclaim the gospel. He said, "Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap, let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God."¹³ That is our sacred privilege and obligation.

The field is still white and all ready to harvest. Church members remain a small percentage of the world's population. "For there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations . . . who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it."¹⁴ In proclaiming the gospel

we need to be sensitive to the feelings of others, remembering that "we claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may."¹⁵

Missionaries labor diligently to teach and baptize those who accept the gospel. In the process their own testimonies become deeply rooted. Missionary service provides the finest foundation possible for young people as they move into adulthood. The deep roots they sink into the gospel will sustain them for a lifetime and for all eternity. The Church needs more missionaries, many more, including couples, to fulfill its charge to proclaim the gospel "unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people."¹⁶

Teach pure doctrine

God has revealed everything necessary for our salvation. We should teach and dwell on the things that have been revealed and avoid delving into so-called mysteries. My counsel to teachers in the Church, whether they instruct in wards and stakes, Church institutions of higher learning, institutes of religion, seminaries, or even as parents in their homes, is to base their teachings on the scriptures and the words of latter-day prophets.

We should follow Paul's counsel to the Ephesians: "Be no more . . . tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine."¹⁷ The winds of false doctrine that are blowing today both outside and a few within the Church are far more dangerous to the ultimate salvation of mankind than are earthquakes, hurricanes, typhoons, volcanic eruptions, and other natural disasters. These winds can uproot people if their roots are not firmly anchored to the Rock of our salvation, which is the teachings and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Be firmly rooted in gospel principles

We as a people are to live our religion and its principles and follow the leadership of our prophet, seer, and revelator regardless of what the world does. We should strive always to be obedient to our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and should keep in mind these words of the Savior: "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise."¹⁸

The Lord has reserved this land as the place for the restoration of his church. For this land to achieve its full potential, its citizens must remain rooted firmly in the principles that made it great. The enemies of God are attacking the core foundations of this land. The Lord's law for this land is declared in the Book of Mormon, where we read that this land is a "land of promise" that "the Lord God had preserved for a righteous people. . . . And whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off."¹⁹ The only power strong enough to withstand a fulness of iniquity is the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As we understand and live the fundamental principles, we will develop unshakable testimonies and convictions of their truth that will keep us from ever being swayed or uprooted.

Our Heavenly Father has endowed us with hearts of courage and faith, with strong wills, and with the ability to understand and to see clearly the difference between right and wrong, good and evil. He mercifully has clothed each member with the gift of the Holy Ghost, which gives us insight and personal power.

Even though the tasks of life become heavy, and although sorrow thrusts a drooping burden upon us, the light that emanates from our Savior beckons us on, undismayed. A righteous self-discipline can and will rule our lives.

The Church will never compromise

In closing I should like to state this: Our church does not and will not in any way compromise its position, and never at any time or place does it falter, hesitate, or show any reluctance to bear unwavering testimony to the divinity of Jesus Christ. Let us not forget the two giant trees we observed in Molokai whose roots were not strong or deep enough for the trees to withstand the heavy winds that destroyed them.

I bear testimony that we can find peace, security, and joy and happiness in the principles of the gospel. I know our Heavenly Father lives and that his Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. They know and love each one of us. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. We are led by a prophet today, President Howard W. Hunter. I bear this testimony humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 354.
2. Moses 4:2.
3. Abraham 3:25.
4. Matthew 7:24–27.
5. D&C 6:34.
6. D&C 130:22.
7. Moses 4:1.
8. Moses 4:3–4.
9. Moroni 7:12–13, 16–17.
10. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), p. 277.
11. D&C 59:6.
12. Mark 16:15.
13. D&C 6:3.
14. D&C 123:12.
15. Articles of Faith 1:11.
16. D&C 42:58.
17. Ephesians 4:14.
18. D&C 82:10.
19. Ether 2:7, 9.

Sister Patricia P. Pinegar

President Hunter, President Hinckley, President Monson, thank you for this opportunity to share my testimony and my feelings of joy, gratitude, and responsibility for being called to serve the Primary children of the Church.

Redwoods hold each other up

I have appreciated what Elder Wirthlin has taught us. I have also had an experience similar to his.

Several years ago while my husband, Ed, and I were serving in the England London South Mission, there was an unexpected storm. All night the winds raged. When morning came we ventured from the mission home to see the damage. It was devastating. Many trees throughout our garden, the neighborhood, and all of southern England had been uprooted. It was amazing to see the fallen trees with their gigantic root systems, still intact, jutting into the air. I came to the conclusion that because of the "easiness of the way" (Alma 37:46)—rain is plentiful in England—the trees had no need to sink their roots deep into the earth to get the nourishment they needed. Their roots were not strong enough or deep enough to withstand the hurricane-force winds.

On the other hand, the giant redwood trees that grow in northern California also have a very shallow root system. But when they are surrounded by other redwood trees, the strongest, fiercest wind cannot blow them over. The roots of the giant redwood trees intertwine and strengthen each other. When a storm comes, they actually hold each other up.

May I share with you some personal examples and thank those people who have been as the giant redwoods in my life, those who have been an example of caring and teaching, those who have intertwined their roots in mine and

helped me stand firm as they taught me through their words and their lives.

Gratitude to family

I feel deep gratitude to my mother, who allowed me to be responsible and didn't always fix my mistakes. To my father, who is soon to be eighty-nine years old and is living with us, thank you, Dad. Thank you for teaching me as the scriptures counsel, "only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; . . . reproof betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love" (D&C 121:41, 43).

The strongest intertwining roots in my life are those of my companion and sweetheart, Ed, who is supernally righteous. He has taught and encouraged me, exemplifying President Hunter's prayer "that we might treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness" (quoted in *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 4).

To my children, who are a part of my roots, who are a brightness of hope in my life—thank you for helping me stand tall with gladness because you are trying.

I am a happy grandmother. Thirteen of our seventeen grandchildren are Primary and pre-Primary age. They will help teach me about Primary and children. They can be my hands-on training. Could there be a better calling for a grandmother than to love and strengthen children?

Gratitude to auxiliary leaders

May I offer a sincere expression of gratitude to you, my brothers and sisters, who have strengthened me by forgiving me when I have disappointed you.

There are many others in my life who have encouraged me and allowed

me to connect with their strengths. My deep gratitude to President Janette C. Hales, the Young Women presidency, board, and staff who have shared their wisdom and insights, who have more than loved and supported me these last two years. To Michaelene Grassli, Betty Jo Jepsen, Ruth Wright, and the Primary board, thank you for your devotion and untiring efforts to encourage all members of the Church to focus on what is best for the children.

Gratitude to Saints

When I was ten or eleven years old, I became the Primary organist in the ward in Hawaii where I grew up. That is one of my most vivid Primary memories. I remember being very nervous. I remember making many mistakes. But I remember even more clearly that the Primary leaders cared more about me than about the mistakes I made.

I thank the community of Saints, the ward family of Saints, who, throughout my life, have provided "safe places"—places where I was able to be taught, to have experiences, to practice, and to eventually better understand and live the principles of the gospel.

Teach the children

One day as Ed and I were maneuvering the streets of England, he turned to me with tears in his eyes, and he said, "Look." I turned and saw a child on the side of the road. And then he said, "Who will teach the children?" That thought will not leave my mind or my heart. Who will teach the children? Who will teach the child who asks, "Will Heavenly Father really answer my prayer?" Who will teach Kate when at five years of age she asks, "Why do we need Jesus?" Who will teach the children? Please, will you? Will you? Will you help teach the children?

Since my call I've knelt and asked, "Father, what do you want the children to be taught?"

Teach and show the children that Heavenly Father loves them and has confidence in them because they are his children.

Teach and show them that they do need Jesus, our Savior, our guide. Help them understand and accept his love and trust him and follow him. Teach them that our prophet, President Howard W. Hunter, has said, "We should at every opportunity ask ourselves, 'What would Jesus do?' and then be more courageous to act upon the answer." He also said, "We must know Christ better than we know him; we must remember him more often than we remember him; we must serve him more valiantly than we serve him" ("He Invites Us to Follow Him," *Ensign*, Sept. 1994, p. 5).

Teach the children that at eight years of age, when they are baptized and receive the Holy Ghost, they will be responsible for their choices. Teach them that they will be tempted, but as they listen to the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost, he will help them with their choices.

We can teach the children these gospel truths and all of the truths of the plan of happiness that Heavenly Father wants his children to understand and live. Family home evening can be one of those safe and loving places where the Spirit is felt. With eight children in our home, I also have vivid memories that family home evening wasn't always easy. Remember other opportunities for teaching: family prayer, family scripture study (don't give up!), in the classroom, in the hall, in the neighborhood.

Stand by children in life's storms

And please, will each one of you be as the stalwart and dependable redwood trees, connecting and intertwining your

roots of testimony, of faith, of love, of kindness and patience with every child? Their roots are not deep enough for them to stand alone in the storms of life. They need us—every one of us—parents, teachers, leaders, youth, brothers, sisters. They need you.

And now I look to the future. How grateful I am for the principle of presidency, and for Sister Anne Wirthlin and Sister Susan Warner. "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14). We will stand together in unity as we support our priesthood leaders and help parents teach and strengthen children.

To the Primary children of the world, I want you to know that there are many people you don't even know who love you and care about you, who want you to be safe, be happy, and feel peace. I love you and would want you to feel "encircled about . . . in the arms of his love" (2 Nephi 1:15) and my love. Listen carefully to every good thing you hear about Heavenly Father and Jesus our Savior and then try your very best to follow him by doing what he wants you to do.

All of us can be like the giant redwood trees and support and strengthen each other, especially the children, that when storms arise we can actually hold each other up. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and Sister Patricia P. Pinegar, general Primary president. I might say, Sister Pinegar, that for many years President Howard W. Hunter was the member of the Twelve who was an adviser to the Primary. You have a friend in court, and as Elder LeGrand Richards often said, one friend in court is better than a hundred friends in the courtyard.

Yesterday we thanked Sister Grassli and her counselors as they were released, and we of course have sustained a new Primary presidency. We should really take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the husbands of the sisters who serve in the auxiliary organizations. Without your support, brethren, your dear wives could not do nearly the work that they do. You are as silent redwood trees, sustaining each one of your companions, and we're very grateful to you.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top." And then Elder Rex D. Pinegar, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Rex D. Pinegar

It's been a blessing to be here and listen to the instruction we've received. It's a special privilege to welcome these men and to bid farewell for a time to those who will be leaving us. We're grateful for the valiant service these men have rendered.

President Hunter, I love you and sustain you with all my heart and soul,

as do all the Seventy. We declare to all our testimony of the reality of Jesus Christ and of your calling as His prophet at this time.

"What we need is home teachers"

I first met President Howard W. Hunter in 1967 when I reported to his

office to be set apart for a new calling. We discussed my new assignment for a moment; then he surprised me by saying something like, "Brother Pinegar, we don't need anyone to serve in that calling. Do you know what we need?" I sat there not knowing how to respond. I was wondering if I was mistaken about my call. In his pleasant way, he said if we were to stop the next one hundred members of the Church who passed in front of the Church Administration Building, almost all of them would be able and willing to serve in that same calling. "What we need," he said, "is home teachers. That is the great need in the Church today."

Then with a smile he said, "All right, Brother Pinegar, I'll set you apart anyway." As he placed his hands on my head, I was uncertain what Elder Hunter would say. I thought he might set me apart as a home teacher. In a kind, reassuring manner he gave me a blessing that I would be able to fulfill my calling. I promised myself that I would be a better home teacher.

President Hunter's reference to home teachers that day is in harmony with his focus now on the simple messages of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The great work of the Lord is primarily accomplished through small, kind acts that exemplify the basic teachings of His gospel. Obedience in doing the simple things has always been the means of obtaining the blessings of the Lord.

Naaman—obedience in simple things

Remember the story of Naaman, a captain for the king of Syria—"a great man with his master . . . because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: . . . a mighty man in valour, but . . . a leper" (2 Kings 5:1).

At the direction of his king, Naaman went to Elisha the prophet to be healed of his dreaded affliction.

"So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

"And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

"But Naaman was wroth . . . and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. . . .

"And his servants came near . . . and said, . . . if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

"Then went [Naaman] down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (vv. 9–11, 13–14).

Are we not sometimes like Naaman, looking for big or important things to do and bypassing simple things which could change our lives and heal us of our afflictions?

The power of small, simple acts

At a Brigham Young University fireside, President Hunter said, "If you feel that . . . what you do this year or in the years to come does not make you very famous, take heart. Most of the best people who ever lived weren't very famous either" ("No Less Serviceable," in *Brigham Young University 1990–91 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* [Provo: Brigham Young University, 1991], p. 6).

On another occasion he said that "the achievement of true greatness is a long-term process. . . . It seems that it always requires regular, consistent, small, and sometimes ordinary and

mundane steps over a long period of time" ("What Is True Greatness?" in *Brigham Young University 1986-87 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* [Provo: Brigham Young University, 1987], p. 115).

The Lord has said, "Out of small things proceedeth that which is great" (D&C 64:33).

President David O. McKay also spoke of the power of small and simple acts:

"There is no one great thing that we can do to obtain eternal life, and it seems to me that the great lesson to be learned in the world today is to apply in the little acts and duties of life the glorious principles of the Gospel. Let us not think that because some of the things named this afternoon may seem small and trivial, that they are unimportant. Life, after all, is made up of little things. Our life, our being, physically, is made up here of little heart beats. Let that little heart stop beating, and life in this world ceases.

"The great sun is a mighty force in the universe, but we receive the blessings of his rays because they come to us as little beams, which, taken in the aggregate, fill the whole world with sunlight. The dark night is made pleasant by the glimmer of what seem to be little stars; and so the true Christian life is made up of little Christ-like acts performed this hour, this minute, in the home, in the quorum, in the organization, in the town, wherever our life and acts may be cast" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1914, pp. 87-88).

Simple teachings make a strong foundation

Focusing our attention on teaching and living the simple messages of the Savior in our homes will strengthen our families, perfect the society in which we live, and improve ourselves. It will enable us to successfully combat the erosion of the family, which President

Hunter has said is the greatest challenge in the world today. *Our first line of defense in a world of spiritual and moral decay is and will continue to be the family.*

Christlike qualities instilled early in one's life establish values that lead us to make correct choices and actions. It has been said, "Children are like wet cement; whatever falls on them makes an impression" (Haim G. Ginott).

As a teenage boy I began working for a contractor pouring concrete foundations for homes. I learned that concrete was made of a mixture of very simple elements which of themselves were not stable enough for a foundation. But mixed together in proper sequence and proportions, tiny grains of sand, small pebbles, water, and cement powder form a unique substance of unusual strength and durability. For a few hours after the concrete is mixed, it can be poured into any desired form. At first, before it is completely hardened, even a tiny bird hopping across its soft surface will leave an imprint. Later, however, it becomes so firm an elephant could walk over it without leaving any tracks.

Just as a few simple elements combined in a proper way form a sturdy foundation for a house, so do the simple teachings of the gospel bond together to make a strong foundation for our lives.

In contrast, we must be aware that there are small things that can destroy rather than build or strengthen us. Tiny grains of salt sprinkled on concrete can actually cause it to break up and crumble if they are not removed. Similarly, small steps taken in the wrong direction, ignored or uncorrected, will weaken and destroy our lives. Big problems grow out of thinking that little things don't matter.

Family home evening—a simple thing

Like Naaman, we have been counseled by our prophets to do simple things that do matter. We have received simple

instructions which we can all follow to strengthen our families, to heal our spiritual afflictions, and to become followers of Jesus Christ in thought and action. Parents have been counseled to set aside one night each week to teach fundamental gospel principles to their children.

The First Presidency has stated:

"No Church organization can supplant the parents in discharging this obligation. The best the Church can do is to give every aid possible so that the parents will be left without excuse in discharging this most sacred and vital work of building a solid foundation in the home" (*Family Home Evening: Love Makes Our House a Home* [manual, 1974], p. 2).

As we faithfully hold quality family home evenings, we "will gain strength to withstand the temptations of the world and will receive many blessings which will help qualify [us] to enjoy [our] families through eternity in the Celestial Kingdom" (First Presidency, *Family Home Evening: Strengthening Families* [manual, 1978], p. 2).

If the prophet bid us do some great thing for so great a blessing, would we do it? Holding regular family home evening is such a small thing we can do to obtain these great blessings.

Daily family prayer—a simple thing

Another simple thing we all can do to draw us closer to the Savior and to bring us His guidance is to have daily family prayer. The Savior himself taught, "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed" (3 Nephi 18:21).

Praying together, seeking to know the will of our Father in Heaven, and desiring strength to do His will draws Him near to us. This practice unifies family members in a common direction and purpose. How simple the Lord has

made it for us! All we have to do is sincerely ask in faith in his name, and He will hear and answer our prayers. Yet if the prophet bid us do some great thing for such blessings, would we do it? Holding regular family prayer is such a simple thing to do to receive these great blessings.

Book of Mormon study—a simple thing

President Ezra Taft Benson promised that we can keep our children close to us and to the Lord and that we will receive "blessing[s] hitherto unknown" if we will faithfully read the Book of Mormon together and "abide by its precepts" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, p. 100; or *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 78). He said that in the Book of Mormon we will "find great power, great comfort, and great protection" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, p. 6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, p. 7).

As we read of the Lord, hear His words, and learn His teachings, we will receive the peaceful spirit of truth and faith in our homes and in our hearts. We will learn what Jesus would have us do, what he would have us say.

If the prophet had bid us do some great thing to receive these blessings, would we do it? Reading the Book of Mormon each day is a simple requirement for receiving such great blessings.

Do the simple things

In the Book of Mormon the prophet Nephi tells his people why many of the children of Israel perished in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. Because of their iniquity, the Lord "sent fiery flying serpents among them; and after they were bitten he prepared a way that they might be healed; and the labor which they had to perform was to look; and because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished" (1 Nephi 17:41).

Brothers and sisters, we must not fail to do the simple and easy things that the gospel requires and thereby deny ourselves and our families the great blessings that the Lord has promised.

In general conference just last April, Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve asked: "Given the gravity of current conditions, would parents be willing to give up just one outside thing, giving that time and talent instead to the family?" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, p. 121; or *Ensign*, May 1994, p. 90).

Charles Francis Adams, grandson of the second president of the United States, was a successful lawyer, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, and the U.S. ambassador to Britain. Amidst his responsibilities he had little time to spare. He did, however, keep a diary. One day he wrote, "Went fishing with my son today—a day wasted!"

On that same date, Charles's son, Brooks Adams, had printed in his own diary, "Went fishing with my father today—the most wonderful day of my life" (quoted in Scott Walker, *Daily Guide-*

posts: 1994 [Carmel, N.Y.: Guideposts, 1993], p. 67).

President Hunter has said, "Frequently it is the commonplace tasks that have the greatest positive effect on the lives of others" ("What Is True Greatness?" p. 115).

I pray that we will heed the counsel of our prophet and have the faith to follow the Savior by doing the simple things His gospel requires. For if the Lord's prophet had bid us do some great thing to receive the Lord's great blessings, who among us would not do it? In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Rex D. Pinegar, for that wonderful sermon. Elder Pinegar is a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Elder Lance B. Wickman, who was sustained as a Seventy at April conference, will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Lance B. Wickman

Leaving for Vietnam

I shall never forget one night almost three decades ago. My bride, Patricia, and I had been married for two years. We lived in a small duplex on Oahu's north shore. I was an army infantry officer, a platoon leader, assigned to a unit at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Our brigade had been ordered to war in Vietnam. My plane was scheduled for departure after midnight, and a good Latter-day Saint friend had agreed to take me to the airfield at 11:00 P.M.

All through that long evening, Pat and I sat on the sofa in our tiny living room with our fingers intertwined, watching the hands of the clock approach the fateful hour and listening to

the soft lapping of the surf against the shore. The ticking of the clock seemed a metronome of mortality in painful contrast to the muffled rushing of the eternal sea. At last the hour of parting arrived. Inside the doorway to our little home, I clutched my bride to my bosom and kissed her one last time, and then I was gone. As I closed the door, I wondered if I had seen my sweetheart for the last time in mortality. It was truly night.

My friend and I drove silently in the darkness through the sugarcane and pineapple fields of Oahu. My heart felt as though it would break. Then as we passed Schofield, an unseen infantry unit on night maneuvers fired a flare. Its brilliance momentarily lit the inky

darkness and seemed to ignite a spiritual flame in the blackness that invested my soul. My thoughts were drawn away from this saddest of days to the very happiest: back to that beautiful December day when Pat and I had entered the holy temple and there were sealed to each other, not just for this life only but for all eternity. I thought of the eternal covenants we had made. Like the sunrise, it dawned on me that no matter what happened in the uncertain future just ahead, Pat would always be mine. When I reached the air base, I telephoned her. In the spirit of a renewed hope and peace born of faith and understanding, we talked and laughed softly before once more bidding each other good-bye. It was only midnight, but for me the sun was already rising.

"Stand ye in holy places"

On another day in another place, however, the sun was setting on the mortal ministry of the Messiah as he departed the temple at Jerusalem for the last time. Climbing atop the Mount of Olives with his disciples, the Savior prophesied the cataclysmic events that would precede the destruction of Jerusalem and his second coming. He then issued this portentous admonition to his disciples, ancient and modern: "Then you shall *stand in the holy place*; whoso readeth let him understand" (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:12; italics added; see also Matthew 24:15). Latter-day revelations provide understanding. They teach that in our day, amidst strife and catastrophe and pestilence, there are two kingdoms locked in grim struggle for the souls of men—Zion and Babylon. More than once they repeat the injunction to "stand in holy places" for a refuge from these storms of latter-day life (D&C 45:32; see also D&C 87:8; 101:16–23). Prominent among such holy places, and key to all the others, is the temple of the Lord.

The words *Zion* and *temple* belong in the same sentence together. In August 1833, as Saints attempted against much persecution to establish a geographic Zion in Jackson County, Missouri, the Prophet Joseph Smith was counseled in revelation to build a house unto the Lord "for the salvation of Zion" (D&C 97:12). The temple is the key to salvation, it said, because it is a place of thanksgiving, a place of instruction, and a place of understanding in all things (see D&C 97:12–14). Then comes this glorious promise: "Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it *shall see God*. . . . Therefore, . . . let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn" (D&C 97:16, 21; italics added). For Zion, the pure in heart, the temple holds the key that unlocks holy places—places of rejoicing—while those in Babylon's byways are condemned to mourn.

The temple helps us through difficulty

I was to bid my dear wife good-bye twice more during the tumultuous years of the Vietnam War. In a later year we would stand together and say farewell as a five-year-old son slipped from this world across the veiled threshold into the next; and later still we would welcome a handicapped daughter into mortality. Life has brought us its challenges, as it does to all. But through the years I have come to appreciate the wisdom of a dear friend, a patriarch and temple sealer. "Lance," he said, "the joy I receive is more than just being in the temple. *The temple is in me!* And when I leave the temple, its peace goes with me."

So it can be for every righteous soul. When we visit the temple as often as distance and individual circumstance permit, *the temple will be in us*. Then,

despite the buffetings of life, we will always be in a holy place. The house of the Lord beckons to all who would be numbered with Zion: "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths" (Isaiah 2:3).

Peace in the San Diego temple

The day of the San Diego California Temple dedication attended by our stake, I came into the celestial room a few minutes early, accompanied by my daughter and one of my sons. My dear Pat was directing the choir. As though joined by angels, they rehearsed these magnificent words from a beloved Latter-day Saint hymn—a hymn we sang only moments ago:

High on the mountain top
A banner is unfurled.
Ye nations, now look up;
It waves to all the world.
In Deseret's sweet, peaceful land,
On Zion's mount behold it stand!
["High on the Mountain Top," *Hymns*, no. 5]

Pat's eyes met mine. For a brief moment I was transported back across the years, past the challenges and the heartaches to that wonderful day when together we had entered the house of the Lord. I drew my children close. In that instant a wonderful, celestial feeling swelled my breast. I *knew* I was in a holy place. I felt a peace as I had on that dark night so many years ago—and again I rejoiced. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

The Spirit of Elijah

Within the past year, four of our beloved General Authorities have concluded their mission in mortality. The passing of President Ezra Taft Benson and Elders Marvin J. Ashton, Sterling W. Sill, and Clinton L. Cutler has prompted a great outpouring of love to their families. Their departure has also underscored a scriptural explanation of activities on the other side of the veil: "The faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel . . . in the great world of the spirits of the dead."¹

President Spencer W. Kimball taught that "our great part in this aspect of missionary work is to perform on this earth the ordinances required for those who accept the gospel over there."²

These thoughts, coupled with the fact that next month marks the one hun-

dredth anniversary of the Genealogical Society of Utah, highlight the great importance and influence of "the spirit of Elijah."³ Happily, the date of this centennial closely coincides with the birthday of President Howard W. Hunter, who once presided over that society and who now beckons us to the house of the Lord.

Baptism is essential to enter the kingdom of God

Basic to all Christian understanding is the timeless statement made by Jesus: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."⁴

Following His crucifixion, Jesus ministered in the spirit world, setting in motion missionary work among those who had died without hearing the gospel.⁵ Baptism for these souls would logically be expected. Yet only one verse

in the New Testament refers directly to that need: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?"⁶

Those questions of the Apostle Paul, without latter-day revelation, would remain an enigma. With latter-day revelation they become clear. Clarification began when the Prophet Joseph Smith was tutored by the angel Moroni,⁷ who said:

"I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

"And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn⁸ to their fathers.

"If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted."⁹

Joseph compared Moroni's teaching to a similar prophecy by Malachi—that Elijah would come again.¹⁰ We know that Elijah did return—at least twice—after Malachi's promise. At Christ's transfiguration, Elijah appeared on the mount to Peter, James, and John.¹¹ At the Kirtland Temple, April 3, 1836, Elijah appeared to the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery and said, "The keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands."¹²

The Prophet Joseph Smith was chosen to reestablish the Church, to receive and administer priesthood authority, and to restore plain and precious truths lost to human knowledge.¹³ One such doctrine was that of salvation for the dead—a pivotal part of the promised "restitution of all things."¹⁴

Several years ago Elder Howard W. Hunter said: "Does it seem reasonable that persons who have lived upon the earth and died without the opportunity of baptism should be deprived throughout eternity? Is there anything unreasonable about the living performing the

baptisms for the dead? Perhaps the greatest example of vicarious work for the dead is the Master himself. He gave his life as a vicarious atonement, that all who die shall live again and have life everlasting. He did for us what we could not do for ourselves. In a similar way we can perform ordinances for those who did not have the opportunity to do them in lifetime."

Elder Hunter added: "Not only may baptisms be performed for the dead, but endowments; also sealings, by which wives become eternal companions to husbands and their children sealed to them as a family. The sealing of family units can be continued until the family of God is made perfect. This is the great work of the dispensation of the fulness of times. . . . The uniting and redemption of the family of God was the divine plan before the foundations of the earth were laid."¹⁵

President Hunter's classic statement emphasizes the importance of temple work for our own families and helps us to understand the Old Testament prophecy that "saviours shall come up on mount Zion."¹⁶ This exalting service for others unseen is one of the most noble acts of human kindness.

Temple work—ancient and modern

From the days of Adam to the meridian of time, temple ordinances were performed for the living only. Ordinances for the dead had to await the Atonement and postmortal ministry of the Savior.¹⁷

There was no provision for baptism for the dead when the Kirtland Temple was designed. Yet it served an important preparatory purpose. One week after its dedication, the Lord came personally to the temple to accept it.¹⁸ Then, under His direction, Moses, Elias, and Elijah restored specific keys of priesthood authority.¹⁹

Five years later the Saints were in Nauvoo, Illinois. There the Lord again commanded them to build a temple—this time with additional facilities—because, He said, “a baptismal font there is not upon the earth, that they, my saints, may be baptized for those who are dead—For this ordinance belongeth to my house.”²⁰

Then, to make certain that there could be no misunderstanding, He issued a solemn word of warning: “If you do *not* these [baptisms for the dead] ye shall be rejected as a church, with your dead, saith the Lord.”²¹

Though the Nauvoo Temple was destroyed by fire, it served its sacred purposes.²²

Genealogical records for use in temples

Throughout the world, members of the Church faithfully prepare family records for use in our many temples. When ordinances are performed there, further documentation is required because the Lord said:

“When any of you are baptized for your dead, let there be a recorder, and let him be eye-witness of your baptisms; . . .

“That in all your recordings it may be recorded in heaven; whatsoever you bind on earth, may be bound in heaven; whatsoever you loose on earth, may be loosed in heaven.”²³

This weighty doctrine pressed itself upon the Prophet’s mind.²⁴ His thoughts resonated with those of previous prophets. Joseph wrote, “John the Revelator was contemplating this very subject in relation to the dead, when he declared, . . . *I saw the dead . . . stand before God; and the books were opened; . . . and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books.*”²⁵

Then the Prophet Joseph added, “Whatsoever you do not record on earth shall not be recorded in heaven; for out of the books shall your dead be judged.”²⁶

Elijah and keys of priesthood authority

In 1844, Joseph Smith asked, “What is this office and work of Elijah?” The Prophet promptly answered his own question:

“It is one of the greatest and most important subjects that God has revealed. . . .

“ . . . This is the spirit of Elijah, that we redeem our dead, and connect ourselves with our fathers which are in heaven. . . . This is the power of Elijah and the keys of the kingdom of Jehovah.”²⁷

Some among us still have neither perceived the Spirit of Elijah nor its power. Yet we are bound by this warning:

“These are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over. . . . For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, [for] they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect.”²⁸

Joseph Smith’s responsibility was to “lay the foundation”²⁹ for this great work. Important details were to be revealed later. At April conference 1894, President Wilford Woodruff announced this revelation: “We want the Latter-day Saints from this time to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers. Have children sealed to their parents, and run this chain through as far as you can get it. . . . This is the will of the Lord to his people.”³⁰

One hundredth anniversary of the Genealogical Society of Utah

That revelation in April led to the organization of the Genealogical Society of Utah the following November 13, 1894. Its objectives were “to establish and maintain a Genealogical Library . . . ; to teach members how to compile acceptable family records and to trace

their pedigrees; and to foster temple ordinances.³¹ Events of that historic year established family history research and temple service as *one work* in the Church.

In the century since then, much has been accomplished. More and more people are becoming excited about discovering their roots, and the Church is doing its best to help them. The Church adopted the term *family history* to encourage this activity among *all* its members, especially those who might be intimidated by the word *genealogy*. In addition, 2,150 busy and productive family history centers have been established throughout the world. For example, the FamilySearch® Center in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building has served hundreds of thousands of visitors, at least two-thirds of whom have found something in the computer file about their ancestors.

More than 300,000 copies of the Church's computer program Personal Ancestral File™ are used in libraries and homes by many hundreds of thousands of people. Our FamilySearch program is used by millions of genealogical researchers throughout the world, most of whom are not members of our church. TempleReady™ allows convenient and almost immediate clearance by personal computer of names for temple ordinances that formerly required much time and labor.

Sister Nelson, our family, and I have submitted our own ancestral names to the temple and have performed ordinances for them. Because we are fortunate to live near a temple, we like to meet there early in the morning. Usually in less than an hour, the initiatory work is accomplished, our youth are taken directly to school, their mothers return home, and their fathers get to work—on time! When we do endowments or sealings, available adults prefer to meet early in the evening to share that choice experience. Following that, we gather at

home to update our records and enjoy some of Sister Nelson's homemade goodies.

We are also doing temple work for ancestors of a Russian convert to the Church who is not able to travel to a temple. While our son was serving his mission in Russia, this devoted convert entrusted records of his relatives to our son, along with a plea that their temple work be done. When our children and grandchildren go to the temple to perform those ordinances, our son's help is needed for pronunciation of names, but not for the perception of joy among all participants.

Service in the temple together is a sublime activity for a family. It provides its own sustaining motivation and verification of the truth of this unique work.

Rights of personal choice, accountability, and privacy

For whom will such temple work be efficacious? Principles of agency pertain on both sides of the veil. There, in postmortal realms, personal choice and accountability will be of paramount importance.³² Not all will accept these ordinances. Not all who would choose to do so may be worthy to receive them. Scriptures indicate that individual faith,³³ repentance,³⁴ and obedience³⁵ will be required to consummate this vicarious work.

Here, on this side of the veil, there are limitations of available time and temples. This means that choosing to identify and perform ordinances for *our own kindred* should receive our highest priority. The Spirit of Elijah will inspire individual members of the Church to link their generations rather than submit lists of people or popular personalities to whom they are unrelated.³⁶

Now, we are mindful of those not of our faith who are concerned about or even offended by the practice of temple ordinances for the dead. To them we

say, our Heavenly Father directed the restoration of keys of priesthood authority and surely intended no offense to any of His children. Quite to the contrary. He intended to bless them. This doctrine and its ordinances are laden with love and are intended to perpetuate the sweetest of all relationships—in families forever.

Nevertheless, the Church is sensitive to these concerns. The First Presidency has asked that, as far as possible, individual rights of privacy be protected. In 1972, they wrote, "Persons submitting names for other than direct ancestors [should] have obtained approval from the closest living relative of the deceased before submitting records of persons born within the last ninety-five years."³⁷ In addition, reminders of rights of precedence and privacy appear *each* time our computer programs are used.

Meanwhile, as a gesture of generosity and goodwill, leaders of the Church continue to make its family history facilities available to interested individuals, regardless of religious affiliation and without admission fees! All patrons, in turn, are invited to make valuable additions to the world's ever-expanding pool of genealogical information.

Opportunities to serve

In a recent statement, President Howard W. Hunter included these remarks: "Let us be a temple-attending and a temple-loving people. Let us hasten to the temple . . . not only for our kindred dead, but let us also go for the personal blessing of temple worship."³⁸

President Hunter's invitation reminds us that we can provide names and ordinances for ancestors for whom information is readily available, and, where possible, we can regularly attend the temple. What and how much we do should depend upon personal circumstances and abilities, direction from Church leaders, and guidance from the

Spirit. Throughout our lives, each of us can do something significant.

I would add that the daily building of happy memories in our families is an important part of making family history pleasant. Each day on earth can bring a little bit of heaven.

Many travel the highways of life without a companion. They too are needed by their families on both sides of the veil. Others may never be able to attend a temple during their mortal lifetime. To the faithful, comfort comes from the knowledge that no blessings will be withheld from any who love the Lord and strive earnestly to keep His commandments.³⁹ We will be judged by our deeds *and* the desires of our hearts—in the Lord's merciful way and time.⁴⁰

No mortal mind could have conceived this divine work. It is evidence of the restoration of the gospel in its fulness and is sparked by the Spirit of Elijah. "Let us, therefore, as a church and a people . . . offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple . . . a book containing the records of our dead . . . worthy of all acceptance."⁴¹ Then we shall bless and be blessed as saviors upon mount Zion, I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. D&C 138:57.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Things of Eternity—Stand We in Jeopardy?" *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, p. 3.
3. 2 Kings 2:15.
4. John 3:5. See also Mark 16:16; D&C 5:16; Moses 6:59. Jesus himself was baptized "to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15; 2 Nephi 31:5–6).
5. See 1 Peter 4:6; D&C 138:10–37.
6. 1 Corinthians 15:29; see also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 179.
7. Especially from 1823 through 1827; see Joseph Smith—History 1:27–59.

8. Later Joseph Smith said that "the word *turn* here should be translated *bind*, or *seal*" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 330).
9. D&C 2:1-3.
10. See Malachi 4:5-6.
11. See Matthew 17:3. Moses held the keys of the gathering of Israel and the gathering of the ten tribes. Elijah held the keys of the sealing power. These are the keys that they conferred upon Peter, James, and John upon the mount. Reference to the sealing power is also indicated in Matthew 16:18-19; see also D&C 128:10; 138:45-48.
12. D&C 110:16.
13. See 1 Nephi 13:26, 28-29, 32, 34-35, 40.
14. Acts 3:21.
15. In Conference Report, Oct. 1971, p. 54; or *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, pp. 71-72.
16. Obadiah 1:21.
17. See D&C 138:18-37.
18. See D&C 110:1-4, 7.
19. See D&C 110:7-16; D&C 2:1-3 and comments in note 11.
20. D&C 124:29-30.
21. D&C 124:32; italics added.
22. On 8 November 1841 the baptismal font "was dedicated by Brigham Young. It was first used two weeks later when Elders Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and John Taylor performed forty baptisms for the dead" (*Church History in the Fulness of Times* [Church Educational System manual, 1989], p. 252). "According to temple records, 5,615 Saints were endowed before going west"—and likewise blessed on their heavenly trek (*Church History in the Fulness of Times*, pp. 303-4).
23. D&C 127:6-7.
24. See D&C 128:1.
25. D&C 128:6.
26. D&C 128:8.
27. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 337-38.
28. D&C 128:15; see also v. 18.
29. D&C 1:30; 21:2; 124:118.
30. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75), 3:256-57; see also *Deseret Semi-Weekly News*, 17 Apr. 1894, p. 1.
31. Archibald F. Bennett, "The Genealogical Society of Utah," *Improvement Era*, Apr. 1935, p. 225.
32. President Ezra Taft Benson and his Counselors issued this statement: "In considering ordinances for the deceased, we need not attempt to determine individual worthiness, whether an ordinance will be accepted, or the probable feelings of other deceased individuals affected by the proposed ordinance. . . . These determinations must, of necessity, be made beyond the veil" (First Presidency letter, 8 Dec. 1988).
33. See Alma 19:13; Ether 3:14; Moses 5:9.
34. See D&C 138:58.
35. See D&C 138:58.
36. President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: "*We are not going to do the temple work for everybody because it does not pertain to them. We are going to do the temple work for those who are entitled, through their faith and their repentance, to enter into the celestial kingdom. . . . I do not know whether one man is worthy and another is not. The Lord has given us the privilege of doing the work for all of our kindred*" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-55], 2:191).
37. *Records Submission Manual*, 4th ed. (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1973), p. 16.
38. Quoted in *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 5.
39. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-55), 2:76; Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979-81), 3:188.
40. See 2 Nephi 9:41; Alma 41:3; D&C 137:9.
41. D&C 128:24.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elder Lance B. Wickman of the Seventy and Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve.

It will now be our privilege to listen to our beloved prophet, President Howard W. Hunter, who will be our concluding speaker.

Before hearing his address, we express appreciation to the Primary Children's Choir from the Kaysville Utah Region, the Mormon Youth Chorus, and the Tabernacle Choir, and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during the conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given the conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters—oh, especially the interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on the stand and on Temple Square.

We're not unmindful of the fact that we have had in attendance many of our distinguished visitors who represent government, education, and business. We're grateful you're here.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference and to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of the conference in many countries.

It has been a wonderful conference. We almost hate to see it come to a close. But what better close than to hear from President Hunter. Following his remarks the Tabernacle Choir will sing "We Have Partaken of Thy Love." We could say the same for President Hunter. President Hunter, we have partaken of your love. The benediction then will be offered by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Seventy.

President Howard W. Hunter

Study and obey conference messages

My dear brothers and sisters, we now come to the conclusion of another wonderful conference of the Church. We have experienced a marvelous outpouring of the Spirit. I commend to you the wise and inspired counsel you have received from the General Authorities and general auxiliary officers of the Church. My humble prayer is that while their instruction is fresh in our minds, each of us will resolve to incorporate it into our lives.

I want you to know how much I love and appreciate my devoted Counselors, President Gordon B. Hinckley and President Thomas S. Monson. They are men

of wisdom, experience, and understanding. I love and sustain my Brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, with whom I served for over thirty-four years. To members of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric, I express my love and gratitude for their sacrifice and service to the Church throughout the earth. Similarly I pay tribute to the general auxiliary officers.

As I have pondered the messages of the conference, I have asked myself this question: How can I help others partake of the goodness and blessings of our Heavenly Father? The answer lies in following the direction received from those we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators, and others of the General

Authorities. Let us study their words, spoken under the spirit of inspiration, and refer to them often. The Lord has revealed his will to the Saints in this conference.

Follow the Son of God

I bear solemn and grateful witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. Certainly he is the center of our worship and the key to our happiness. Let us follow the Son of God in all ways and all walks of life. Let us make him our exemplar and our guide.

We are at a time in the history of the world and the growth of the Church when we must think more of holy things and act more like the Savior would expect his disciples to act. We should at every opportunity ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" and then act more courageously upon the answer. We must be about his work as he was about his Father's. We should make every effort to become like Christ, the one perfect and sinless example this world has ever seen.

Focus on the temple

And we again emphasize the personal blessings of temple worship and the sanctity and safety that are provided within those hallowed walls. It is the house of the Lord, a place of revelation and of peace. As we attend the temple, we learn more richly and deeply the purpose of life and the significance of the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us make the temple, with temple worship and temple covenants and temple marriage, our ultimate earthly goal and the supreme mortal experience.

Let us share with our children the spiritual feelings we have in the temple. And let us teach them more earnestly and more comfortably the things we can appropriately say about the purposes of the house of the Lord.

Let us prepare every missionary to go to the temple worthily and to make that experience an even greater highlight than receiving the mission call. Let us plan for and teach and plead with our children to marry in the house of the Lord. Let us reaffirm more vigorously than we ever have in the past that it does matter where you marry and by what authority you are pronounced man and wife.

All of our efforts in proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead lead to the holy temple. This is because the temple ordinances are absolutely crucial; we cannot return to God's presence without them. I encourage everyone to worthily attend the temple or to work toward the day when you can enter that holy house to receive your ordinances and covenants.

May you let the meaning and beauty and peace of the temple come into your everyday life more directly in order that the millennial day may come, that promised time when "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more . . . [but shall] walk in the light of the Lord" (Isaiah 2:4-5).

Share the gospel

Again and again during his mortal ministry, our Lord issued a call that was both an invitation and a challenge. To Peter and Andrew, Christ said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). We are in the work of saving souls, of inviting people to come unto Christ, of bringing them into the waters of baptism so that they may continue to progress along the path that leads to eternal life. This world needs the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel provides the only way the world will ever know peace. As followers of Jesus Christ, we seek to enlarge the circle of love and

understanding among the people of the earth.

Earlier prophets have taught that every able, worthy young man should serve a full-time mission. I emphasize this need today. We also have great need for our able, mature couples to serve in the mission field. Jesus told his disciples, "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2).

Prophetic blessing

And now, my beloved brothers and sisters, through the power and authority of the priesthood vested in me and by virtue of the calling which I now hold, I invoke my blessings upon you. I bless you in your efforts to live a more Christ-

like life. I bless you with an increased desire to be worthy of a temple recommend and to attend the temple as frequently as circumstances allow. I bless you to receive the peace of our Heavenly Father in your homes and to be guided in teaching your families to follow the Master.

I again testify that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is true. I feel very deeply my dependence on the Lord for the guidance and direction of his kingdom. I thank you again for your sustaining vote and your faith and prayers in behalf of myself and my Brethren, and I do so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "We Have Partaken of Thy Love."

Elder D. Todd Christofferson offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a Primary choir from the Kaysville Utah Region. Vanja Y. Watkins conducted the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

At the general priesthood session a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus provided the music. Donald Ripplinger and Robert C. Bowden conducted the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. John Longhurst and Richard Elliott were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the Conference

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